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of an  
ISLAND WANDERER

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*"A Day-Dream."*

[Frontispiece.]

# The Log of an Island Wanderer

Notes of Travel in the  
Eastern Pacific

By

Edwin Pallander

Author of "Across the Zodiac," etc.

*With 32 Illustrations*

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To

EDWARD ENGLAND, Esq.

OF TOORAK, MELBOURNE

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF

A CHARMING SUMMER SPENT IN THE

ISLES AND ENCHANTED GARDENS

OF AUSTRALASIA

1780497



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# The Log of an Island Wanderer

## CHAPTER I

### IN AUCKLAND—THE DEFEAT OF TEWTOX

“’Twas beyond a joke  
And enough to provoke  
The mildest and best-tempered fiend below.”

—INGOLDSBY.

AUCKLAND is the most respectable city in the world.

The exact reason for this is difficult to determine. External appearance has a good deal to do with it. The long, prim, soberly ugly streets scarifying the pale heavens with their network of telephone wire; the chequered squareness of the harbour frontage, and its rows of orderly steam-boat funnels and glittering acres of plate-glass; the innocently temperate suggestions of those ever-recurring “Coffee” Palaces; the rows of painted villas moulding themselves so persuasively to the curve of the hills—as beautifully uniform in style and feeling as no doubt are the

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souls and political convictions of the occupants—the prevalence of greys and greens in the general colour-scheme; the Puritanical hymn-book air of the Union Company's clerks; the sombre copses of pine and cypress, and the endless frivolity-rebuking cemetery.

Maybe the climate has something to do with it. The Auckland climate is, during the major portion of the year, the softest, warmest, gentlest thing imaginable. It is as mild as the kiss of a curate on the cheek of a spinster. To realise it adequately you should cling passionately to something and think of crushed strawberries. I know not whether holiness is of the line and plummet, but if it be, Auckland is contracting for a race of angels.

Auckland was not built in a day. Its growth was as decently slow as everything in it. Auckland did not shoot up like a *nouveau riche*. It began by honestly serving its apprenticeship. Those were the days when, in the guise of pioneer, it earned its living by the sweat of its brow and the sureness of its aim, feasting magnificently, knife in hand, between the rotting timber-piles and the drifting camp-smoke—days of the axe, the forge, the war-drum.

Auckland came of age, as most healthy scions do, on the front doorstep. To that party came

## In Auckland—the Defeat of Tewtox

from across the seas the merchant, the capitalist, the grievance, the man-who-was-good, the woman with a mission. The tone of Auckland's ancestral abode changed. A king arose who knew not the pioneer, and he formed a kingdom of Ledger—with inky-fingered courtiers and souls to be saved—all the conquering battle-line of a speckless bureaucracy.

Following the usual course of merchant-princes, Auckland next set to work to unearth for itself a pedigree. It was a queer one, rather—extending on one side to Lombard Street, on the other to Hongi Heke—but the frames of the ancestors were heavy in gold and carried weight with the querulous. Auckland cultivated a paunch swollen with intestinal red tape, learned to eschew champagne, and go in for dry sherry, to broaden her shirt-front and her vowels, to eat cold beef on Sunday, to be grey, solid, heavy—English. Like Trabb's boy, Auckland said to her old archetype, the pioneer, "Don't know yah." And the archetype, when he didn't drink himself blind, drifted sadly away to the gum-fields and hated the usurper. . . .

I had just arrived at this interesting stage in my musings when some one—Johnson of the *Ovalau*—stopped me abruptly and asked me whether I cared to witness a cock-fight.

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A cock-fight! In Auckland! The thing seemed weirdly incongruous. But was I not booked for a tour in the South Pacific, and ought I to be astonished at anything? In most cases where such an entertainment were offered one would decline, and hastily—but in the present case there were reasons for making the thing especially interesting. Every one in Auckland had heard of the redoubtable fighting-cock Tewtox, the tailless champion of the Pacific, who had mortally inconvenienced every bird of his own size from Rarotonga to the Pelews. Tewtox was a wonderful creature. He was the property of some sailor of the Union Company, and his owner had made a fortune over him. Whenever his vessel landed at an island it was Tewtox's habit to challenge some local bird and send him home bleeding and eyeless in less than ten minutes. Indeed his victories had been so frequent that the whole of Auckland—or that section of it familiar with the technicalities of this noble sport—took an interest in his movements, and the first officer of the *Ovalau* actually had a portrait of this talented fowl hanging on his cabin partition.

It appeared that the challenging party were the crew of the *Pedro Valverde*, a two-hundred-ton schooner from Valparaiso. They were not known

## In Auckland—the Defeat of Tewtox

to have any feathered celebrity on board, and some curiosity was felt as to whom they would present as a champion.

Johnson would willingly have attended the performance himself, but Captain Pond of the *Ovalau* was a man of morals strict, and was known to disapprove of fighting in any form, and cock-fighting in particular. So Johnson contented himself with introducing me to a couple of guides and wishing me all imaginable luck. The sailors twisted me down along the harbour into a region of skeleton hulks, rusting propeller-blades, rotting varnish, and piles of yellow lumber. In a side-street was a staid-looking public-house with scarlet blinds, and the legend "Coffee Palace" broidered in gold over the door. In a dark passage whither we were admitted, a fat man with a bottle-nose bounced out on us like a puppet at a show, and on being told we came to see the fight started dramatically, and pretended to be shocked. Then he changed tactics. He backed me mysteriously into a corner, and with a wink :

"Sir," he said, "this ain't going to be quite what you might call a fair fight. In fact, it's a bit of a plant—and rough on the champion. But if you should notice anything queer, for the love of God don't let on—twiggy-vo?"

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I didn't twiggy in the least, but I somehow understood that the days of Tewtox were numbered, and that a scheme was rife for his immediate smashment.

In a vast room lit by dingy windows an audience of about fifty sailors were collected, sitting pipe in mouth on long benches ranged against the walls. The place had once been a billiard-room, but the racks had been dismantled and the lamps abolished. The atmosphere of tobacco made my eyes smart. A side-door led to another apartment where a major-domo was dispensing drinks. It was the most genial gathering I had yet seen in Auckland.

Some one called Time. There were cheers and clapping of hands from the Union sailors. A canvas bag was produced, and out of it stepped the redoubtable champion Tewtox. In appearance he was a small bird, but the fact that his feathers had been closely clipped and his tail cut short may have altered his looks somewhat. He was in first-chop fighting trim. He strutted boldly to the centre of the room, pecked meditatively at a fallen orange-peel, flapped his clipped wings, and uttered a defiant crow.

"He's all right," said the President, a lanky man with iron-grey side whiskers; "bring on your bird, you lubbers."

## In Auckland—the Defeat of Tewtox

For answer there was a mysterious shuffling in the darkness of the bar-room door behind me and an oath from some one, hurt apparently. A second big bag was placed on the floor, and out waddled one of the strangest creatures imaginable. Its form was that of a monstrous fowl, but there was not a solitary feather on its body—all one could see was a white swollen bag of flesh that quivered and shivered and sank down in a lump, apparently unable to move. On its head—or the portion of its body where its head might have been—some one had fixed with some sticky mixture a scarlet flannel rag, similar to a cock's comb, and round its neck were more frills of some pink substance. There was a howl of derision and excitement.

“It's a turkey.” “No, it ain't.” “Pass it round, and let's have a look at it.” Then the voice of the President shouting “Order, gentlemen—order-r-r, please.”

*What* the bird actually was it was impossible to see. However, here it was, and Tewtox was going to fight it. Any objection which the latter's owner might have experienced in allowing his bird to tackle a stranger of doubtful parentage was silenced by the rum he had drunk and by the curiosity of the rest of the audience.

“Go it, old boy!” he shouted, waving his cigar.

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Tewtox clucked encouragingly. He saw the white lump of flesh, the beak, and the wobbling red comb. Some instinct might have warned him of possible danger lurking under that theatrical disguise, but success had made Tewtox as giddy as his master, and he was stuffed as full of conceit as a lady novelist of adjectives.

Tewtox protruded his head twice inquiringly, rustled his quills in warlike fashion, crowed—then seeing his antagonist showed no signs of life, advanced with a rush and pecked the flabby stranger smartly in the side.

The mysterious one made no movement. Perhaps the loss of its feathers had taken the spirit out of it. It still lay quietly on the floor, its poor head with the dangling strips of flannel turning moodily from side to side as though trying to fathom why it was brought here, and with what object it was being tortured. There were cries of "Shame!" a crash of glass from the bar, and a burst of laughter.

The noise roused Tewtox's spark of ambition. He commenced dancing about like an indiarubber ball, swelling and strutting to and fro, impudently turning his back on his antagonist, and taking pains to evince his contempt generally. Then suddenly rushing to the attack he treated the poor quivering body to a series of sharp pecking bites.



## In Auckland—the Defeat of Tewtox

Even a skinless bird has limits to its endurance. The stranger's eye lightened. It seemed to realise that something was going on—that it was being purposely maltreated, or worse—publicly insulted. From underneath that formless mass a great claw protruded menacingly, and as Tewtox rashly swooped down a third time, the claw caught him by the neck, and held him as in a vice.

There was a howl of excitement. Down went the great beak, and before any one could realise it Tewtox's head parted with a snap from his body, and Tewtox himself rolled over bleeding and fluttering in the agonies of death! At the same moment the strange bird rose, and there, before us, tailless and disreputable, its artificial comb wobbling foolishly on its poor bare head, glaring round on the assembly with warlike fiery eye—was the most ferocious bald-headed eagle ever seen outside a menagerie!

Nothing can describe the fury of Tewtox's owner when he found how he had been tricked. The *Valverde* sailors tried to hustle the eagle into the bag, but the bird's blood was up, and he made his beak meet in the calf of his aggressor in a way that showed he intended to stand no more trifling.

“You rascally, macaroni-chewing, dish-washing son of a dago!” howled Tewtox's master, kicking

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the eagle aside and grabbing the nearest sailor by the collar. "By your leave, gentlemen—no fighting here!" shouted the major-domo, but he was too late, for the majority of the guests were thirsting for a row with the Portuguese sailors, and the room was filled with struggling, pushing humanity. The tide surged down the passage and into the street, smashing the stained-glass doors and littering the pavement with fragments.

The last I saw as I vanished round the corner was a lame white bird skipping in the mud and the president trying to hit it with a soda-water bottle. Next day I was on board the *Ovalau* bound for Rarotonga.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OCEAN OF KIWA

“ Our landwind is the breath  
Of sorrows kissed to death,  
    And joys that were—  
Our ballast is a rose,  
Our way lies where God knows,  
    And love knows where.”

It was Tuesday, the 29th of September, and Auckland had donned her mourning-dress of rain-soaked wharves and dripping hawsers. Rangitoto was hidden behind driving mist-wraiths, and the trailing smoke of the north-shore ferries accentuated the general atmosphere of gloom, as lilies do a funeral. Finally, by way of making the place a little wetter and more in keeping with its surroundings, one of the men started playing with a hose in energetic pretence of washing the decks.

The *Ovalau* was a vessel of some 1250 tons burden, with a diminutive engine that looked like a toy and a miniature aping of the lines of a big ocean steamer which would have been funny if it hadn't been uncomfortable. The saloon was very

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far astern—which meant eating our meals to a tremolo screw accompaniment—and there were one or two hatchways that smelt as though the man who designed them were decaying underneath. The only passengers were a French military man and his wife, for Tahiti ; a genial but sea-sick French doctor, and a tall handsome lady with gray hair and eyes to match, whom Pond introduced me to last night as Mrs. Irwin.

There was no cheering as we moved off—nor would I have been in the mood to participate if there had been. Thank God, sea-sickness and heart-sickness don't go well together. The latter had the start, but long before the *Ovalau* rounded the Barrier light Neptune won in a canter. I crawled meekly in between the white sheets of my bunk, and resigned myself to misery.

*Oct. 2.*—On my sea-legs at last. I met the little French captain in the companion. He was affable and communicative—full of fun, a typical Parisian. He has served his country successively in Algiers, Tonkin, Dahomey, and Pondichery—but it is difficult to draw him out on any subject connected with these countries. Scenery or natives don't interest him. They are barbarians. They have no *monde*, no blue-book, no opera. They have never even heard of the Prince de Sagan. They are not men, they are

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existences. And here—on the very threshold of my fairy-tale, I get a preliminary glimpse of the greatest and most failure-breeding weakness of French colonial enterprise—officialism.

To rule, to command, to drill regiments into scurrying sham-fights down tropical valleys, to dance attendance on mysterious “functions” beset with natives in livery, and gentlemen whose decorations might—boiled down—make very tolerable bullet-proof waistcoats, to rechristen local byways after Parisian thoroughfares, to play “parties” of *écarté*, to draw the francs fresh and fresh, to return home with the glitter of outlandish dignitaryship clinging to one’s name and urging one on to fresh social dazzle—such and no others are the goals striven for by young France in her policy of colonial exiledom. But of the life, manners, history of the country, not a word. They are dead letters. Our little captain is, on the whole, a great deal more intelligent than the average run of epauletted miscreant one meets in the South Pacific, but even he is mildly amused at my keeping a diary. What can there be to record on a tramp across an abominable ocean full of savages? I tell him I never go to bed without writing up my diary.

“And I,” he retorts, drawing himself up, but

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leering amusedly at me out of the corner of his eye to watch the effect of his words, "I never go to bed without praying for the death of the English."

The bloodthirsty little mosquito!

Oct. 4.—The ocean of Kiwa! The name is weird, barbaric, full of mystery. And it was here, in these very waters that the *Ovalau's* propeller-blades are thrashing so remorselessly, that the first primæval canoe—the *Mayflower* of the Maories—struggled and toiled with its starving freight of islanders to reach the promised land, the bleak North Island of New Zealand, with its spouting volcanoes and hissing lakes of sulphur.

Whence came they? No one knows for certain. They came from an island where a king ruled by the name of Pomaré: this naturally suggests Tahiti, but just as you get ready to kill the fatted calf in honour of your superior astuteness, that disgusting nuisance, the antiquary, shivers your dream to atoms with the news that there was no family of that ilk in Tahiti so long ago. Queen Aimata Pomaré is a recent institution entirely.

And so on—and so on. The more you dive into that fell legend the more deeply you flounder in the mist of contradictions. Best leave it alone

## The Ocean of Kiwa

altogether ; at least leave the serious side of it alone ; it reads better as a romance. If you are so minded you can even reconstruct it as a picture. The details spring up only too readily. You see the long clumsy boat with its mildewed crust of sea-salt, the ragged sail of coco-matting, the bowed line of men, the haggard faces of the women—the tears, prayers, curses when each succeeding dawn showed no limit to the merciless waste of water. And then that thrice-blessed, glorious morning, when the survivors of that perishing crew lifted their aching eyes to see the long grey mountains of Coromandel looming through the yellow sunrise. Think of it! The sailings of Columbus and Vasco da Gama must have been a fool to the cruise of that tiny dug-out canoe. Two thousand two hundred miles across a tropical sea, with a bunch of rotten bananas and a few miserable calabashes of water to prolong your agony. The bare idea makes one shiver.

But I am alone in my enthusiasm. Neither the captain nor the doctor take much stock in legends. Ideals become as brittle as glass on a Union steamer, and hardly have you got the roof on your palace of crystal when—presto!—the real steps in and crumbles everything to dust.

Oct. 5.—The real *has* stepped in at last. A

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

shark has swallowed our log. The spinning vane of metal trailing in the wake of the ship attracted the creature's attention, and he bolted it, mistaking it for a fish. Such accidents are not uncommon about here, and Captain Pond tells me this is the second log he has lost since the *Ovalau* commenced running.

Sharks, both of the land and sea variety, are plentiful in the islands, and over the Papeete club tables the shark-liar is as common and as venerable an institution as the golf or bicycle liar is with us. Cuddy, the purser of the *Ovalau*, is a man of sparkling resourcefulness. When the *Upolu*—Cuddy's first ship—was lying at anchor in Levuka some years back, the men used to amuse themselves shark-fishing. It was a tedious business at first, for the float—an empty biscuit-tin soldered watertight—required watching, and the long spells of waiting ate into Cuddy's soul. His natural ingenuity suggested a way out, however. He undid the line from the winch, and knotted it to the lever of the steam-whistle. After that the crew used to be electrified by blasts about once every hour, and the whizz of Cuddy's coat-tails as he bounded up the ladder to answer the summons and secure the prey. Sharks came plentifully enough during the next twenty-four hours. The *Upolu's* decks reeked



## The Ocean of Kiwa

of fishiness, and excitement flagged. The game grew more wary, and bites were few and far between. Cuddy began to think he had sharked the ocean dry. The captain of the *Upolu* was a genial old salt of pronounced Irish extraction. There was a long list of invoices to be made out, and Cuddy chewed the end of his pen-holder while the captain sat on the sofa and suggested amendments. Presently, as the fifteenth invoice was being dated—came a triumphant, screeching blast of the whistle. Cuddy turned pale. He would have given his month's salary to drop the invoices and dash on deck, but the commander's eye was on him and he must bide his time.

Whoo—oo—oo—up!—this time more viciously. “A ten-footer!” said Cuddy to himself with a thrill, and in his excitement he mis-spelt his name on the sixteenth invoice.

Whoo—whoo—whoo—whoop!

“Tare-an-ouns!” said the skipper, who knew nothing of Cuddy's fishing tactics, “have they struck the English fleet or what? Spin up on deck and see what's the matter, like a good fellow.”

Off scrambled the purser. As he reached the door of the companion there were three frantic screeches, a shock, and a roar of angry steam as the big thirty-foot monster dragged whistle, pipe,

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and steel-line after him into the ocean. The damage done was sufficient to make a big hole in Cuddy's salary, but the loss of the fish vexed him more than the money, and he has nursed a covert distrust of the shark tribe ever since.

The log has been replaced, and as the sun sets on our shark yarn we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are exactly one hundred miles from Rarotonga.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ISLE OF ORANGES

“The gushing fruits that Nature gave untilled,  
The wood without a path but where they willed.”

—THE ISLAND.

I WAS awakened this morning by some one shouting my name on deck. The doctor put his head in through the port-hole, looking, in his voluminous squash hat with the pale light of morning behind him, rather like an etching by Vandyck.

We have sighted Rarotonga. As I scramble out of my berth long shadows are creeping up through the grey mist to starboard, set off at intervals by isolated lights—natives fishing on the reef. The screw slows down, and as we draw near the shallows the tall mountains start out like developing photographs. Then the sun comes out, and as the luminous spears strike the floating wilderness of cloud overhead, the world—the lovely South Pacific world—flashes on our delighted eyes in a blaze of life and colour that sets feeble pen and ink at zero. This is what I see.

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Three pointed mountain-peaks, their upper saddles bathed in yellow sunshine, their bases lost in clustering shadow save where some straggling ray shoots its glory across a slope of feathery palm-tops. Near by the waters are roaring on the reef, and a layer of opal mist, catching the light of the distant dawn-fires, flashes it back in a myriad sparkles. By-and-by, as the day grows whiter, the long roadstead with its clusters of coral-built houses peers shyly from between the palm-fringes, while the hills above broaden out into a velvety sea of peaks, crests, plateaux—reflecting and remodelling the light in a thousand facets of green. It is a vision of Paradise.

The *Ovalau's* launch put us ashore shortly before seven o'clock, and we went for a peaceful walk along the beach-road. These same beach-roads are in their way an institution of the South Sea Islands, and indeed are about the only really practicable roadsteads these places possess. Even in the bigger islands—Tahiti, for instance—no effort has been made to hew a path into the interior, and the Broom Road, which tamely follows the sea, is your only salvation. One disadvantage is the absence of bridges. Rivers are not supposed to be a hindrance. As long as you are within the postal radius you are all right. Leave

## The Isle of Oranges

the district—and you are forced to swim. To a native, clad in a crown of flowers and a loin-cloth, this comes merely in the light of a refresher—but to a European it presents its inconveniences.

Rarotonga is—at least in the neighbourhood of the capital, Avarua—no longer the wilderness of pandanus and bamboo that it was in the days of Captain Cook, but enough of its beauties remain intact to render it yet interesting to the artist in search of the beautiful. The majority of the houses—whose modern-looking iron roofs are to a certain extent mitigated by the gorgeous tapestry of flowering creeper—are surrounded by small gardens, and separated from the road by walls of sun-baked coral, resembling the stone fences of Galway or Armagh in their loose and artistic irregularity. Occasionally a practical shanty of corrugated iron, its verandah disfigured by a flaming poster culled from the poetry-murdering archives of Auckland or Sydney, brings you back to the workaday world—but on the whole you can dream your time away in lovely Avarua without being more disillusioned than anywhere else within the tropics.

In the post-office—which is a small ramshackle structure of shingle, with a score of Kanakas in shirts and blue trousers loafing on the verandah—we were supplied with pens that would not write

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and stamps that had to be coaxed into position with mucilage. On a small table in the back parlour, a young man appeared—to judge by sound and action—to be mixing a cocktail. “We only get ice once a month,” he explained apologetically, “so we make the best of it.”

There was a goodly crowd of loafers to welcome us as we came out. Smiling apparently comes natural to these children of nature—I don’t think I noticed a severe or uncheerful face among the whole collection. “They are perfectly happy,” quoth the doctor, then—as a logical afterthought — “they do no kind of work.”

The first glimpse of a group of Island ladies is apt to give the over-modest bachelor a slight shock. The costume adopted is nothing more than a white *peignoir* of muslin—but the impression of *deshabille* is very emphatic, and neither the loose flowing hair nor the bare arms and legs tend to mitigate it, I assure you. As for the men, they wear the broad panama, the scarlet loin cloth (*pareo*), and cotton tunic. Some have of late years taken to wearing duck trousers—but the change is in no ways for the better, and the European garb doesn’t suit either the Kanaka or the climate as well as his own airy costume.

“Hullo—well caught!” Two tiny boys, with

## The Isle of Oranges

grinning brown faces, in knickerbockers and pink shirts, are engaged in a cricket match opposite the gate leading to the school. An original kind of match too—with a palm-leaf rib for bat and a green orange for ball. Meanwhile a cluster of girls—scarlet blossoms stuck behind their ears—look admiringly on from the wall. Presently one of them advances timidly with a sprig of white tuberose, which she presents blushing to the doctor amid clapping of hands from the rest—naughty, wasn't it? But the worthy doctor has worked many cures in these islands, and is one of the most popular characters of the Society group.

“And now,” quoth our mentor, “what would you like to do, gentlemen? Pay an informal undress visit to Queen Makae or ramble up-country and eat oranges? Well—um—it is only seven-thirty, and the dear old lady may hardly be quit of her royal slumbers. We will try the valley.”

A broad gravel walk, flanked by bushes of flowering hibiscus and stephanotis, leads us through a maze of sunny villas, where brown girls are sitting by their sewing-machines—mild-eyed, flirtation-provoking bundles of cloth and buzz—away into the mysterious heart of the woods. Almost before you are aware, the

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

green twilight has closed in. You are in the jungle.

Oh—the richness, the prodigal luxuriance of those Rarotongan forests! The sinful profusion of fruit which a militant army of black hogs—almost greater nature-lovers than their two-footed superiors—are devouring in the shade of the underbrush. The deep green of the bread-fruit, the mangoes with their strings of rosy bulbs, the avocas dangling their big heavy pears within reach of your hand, the papaws like Chinese feather-parasols, and over and above all, the lovely areca-nut palms, nodding their plumed heads above the beds of flowering lantana like the guardian spirits of the glade.

And oranges—oranges everywhere! Rarotonga is essentially a country of orange-trees. Not the squat green-tubbed European version, but massive trees as big as oaks, capable of sheltering a hundred fugitive kings in their spreading branches. I think a nervous horticulturist from Sutton or Kew would go into a dead faint in five minutes. A scarlet glare on the right attracts my attention—I am near a bed of flowering canna. Farther on a sweet sickly perfume makes my head swim. It is the blossom of the wild ginger, a pale beautiful flower trembling on the end of its long rushes like a white



## The Isle of Oranges

butterfly stricken with catalepsy. There is a suspicion of pink lilies in the pools, and long tracts of sensitive grass wither to folded innocence beneath our feet in mute rebuke at the mortal who comes to invade the haunts of Titania.

But who are these? Three little maids in blue and pink, with bags of oranges and satchels. The eldest is chewing a piece of ginger-root and staring us out of countenance with the unblushingness of Eve before the fall. Now for a photograph. The young ladies have seen a camera before and are not a wee bit afraid of being blasted, but show a tendency to giggle that is annoying.

The doctor bargains with the eldest for oranges. What is the price? Well, properly speaking, there is no price. Oranges in Rarotonga, like colonels in America, are a drug in the market. She will take anything in reason, from a kiss to a fiver. The bag is opened and emptied on the ground. Take your choice *tané farani*. Plenty more where those came from. Her sister Vaitipe—the Cinderella of the party—will shin up and get more. A young lady climb a tree, and a tree as tall as a mosque! Who ever heard of such an outrage? Can't she though—she does—and sits grinning in an un-Pickwickian manner on a bough,

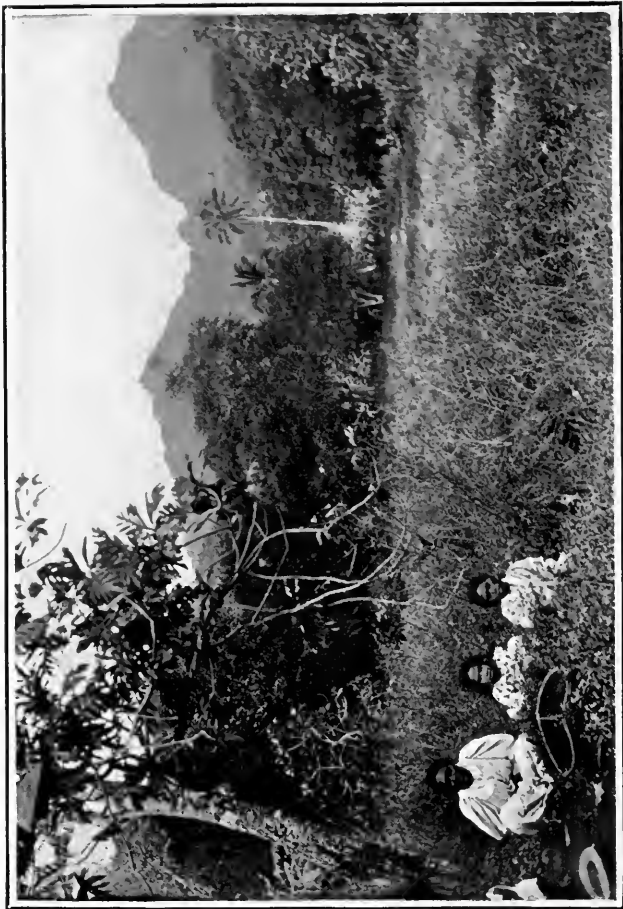
## The Log of an Island Wanderer

as indifferent to vanity and vertigo as her sister—the one chewing the ginger-root—is to lucre and lockjaw. Then down she comes and stands blushing with a load of fruit gathered in a loop of her dress—a sort of South Sea parody of Greuze's "cruche cassée," though our friend the froggy won't hear of the simile.

Yes—money is of little value in Rarotonga. The press of competition, the "sturm und drang" of existence, have not yet fairly passed the reef-opening. It is a moot point whether they ever will. Nature has given the Kanaka an unlimited grant of *dolce far niente*, and the requisite idle disposition to enjoy it.

Staggering attempts at fruit export are made occasionally. Even now as we return from our ramble we find the wharf piled with plaited baskets of pandanus containing bananas and cases of green oranges. Go to D. & E.'s store in the dusty loop to the south of Avarua. In a shady outhouse you will find several tons of fruit piled for exportation. Even the little smelly sea-sick native schooners are loaded thick with odorous cargo. But—bless you—it is only a flea-bite to the vast productive forces of the soil, and eight-tenths of the annual produce remain untouched.

Very different the case in our own beloved latitudes, where—in Folkestone—you cannot get



*Up the Valley, Rarotonga.*



## The Isle of Oranges

a mackerel, in Skye you cannot get a terrier, in Brussels any sort of velvet is pawned off on you for the right sort, and in Mechlin you are told that lace is shy that year. The Rarotongan believes in consuming his own produce, and inasmuch as an odd 1800 miles of sea separate him from the grasping feelers of monopolists, it seems likely that he will continue to do this to the end of the chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### QUEEN MAKAE—JACKY—OFFICIALISM

“The gentle island and the genial soil,  
The friendly hearts, the feasts without a toil.”

RAROTONGA is nominally governed by a British resident—Mr. Gudgeon—and a score of petty representatives ; in reality by the *voces populi* and the picturesque machinery of chance.

They have a queen, of course ; as much from necessity as from choice. Incidentally be it said that a queen is as indispensable to a South Sea Island as a tank to a theatrical company. The Pacific is honeycombed with kingships—from one to fifty people of royal blood being considered the proper share for each island. The real line of monarchs is, of course, as extinct as the dodo—but Makae vahine (pron. Macare) and her august spouse, Namaru, are left as landmarks in the swamp to indicate the site of former ancient *régimes*.

Makae is a dear old lady and very sociable. She lives a quiet retiring life with her husband, a score of attendant maidens, and “Jacky”—of

## Queen Makae

which frail beauty more anon. Namaru himself—oh, where are our introductions? The doctor—our professed guide and protector, has gone off to attend to a case of typhoid. Won't her Majesty be offended? Not a bit of it. We are tourists, not pirates. And how do we like her island? Well—amazingly, and we are sinfully curious to see her husband, good King Namaru. One of the damsels goes to fetch him. Here he comes, the whole six feet of him. As he grasps our hands in his vast palm, that infidel maiden Jacky—who is demurely plaiting a straw hat at one end of the verandah—grins knowingly. Namaru is not a Rarotongan born, but he is a splendid specimen of Kanaka manhood, and though really as gentle as a lamb, somehow impresses one as ferocious.

What will we have to drink? A coco-nut, if it please your Majesty. Jacky—the demure—throws down her hat and goes to fetch one. We hear the chops of the knife, and two lovely nuts, the ivory rim with its crystal contents just visible inside the smooth brown chalice, are handed us smilingly. From her seat in the cane-chair Makae catches the reigning merriment, and smiles too. We have heard of her favourite handmaiden?

Indeed, we have—for the fame of Jacky has gone abroad, and made her great with that

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

peculiar greatness which only the completely islandised can thoroughly appreciate. The girl's existence has been a picturesque one. She was originally a foundling whom Makae—who was in need of a clever maid of honour—adopted and brought up in the palace as her own child. Matters went along swimmingly for some years till, with the transition from child to womanhood, the heart-interest developed—and it brought trouble to Makae's *menage*.

Jacky fell in love. The object of her affections—a tall, chocolate-coloured, lotus-eating Kanaka, with an ear for music, and a soul for hoolas—was not deemed a sufficient match for a member of the queen's household, and, when he came round to serenade Jacky on the accordion, he was told to move on.

Jacky wept and dreamed of stolen interviews. Makae, profiting by the digested lore of her own youthful flirtations, proved an effective chaperon, however, and poor Augustus Fitzgerald—I do not know his other name—found himself check-mated at every corner.

The end came one terrible day when Makae, on brusquely entering the drawing-room, found Jacky and her young man measuring love-ribbon in a corner. The good queen's anger blazed. Jacky was summoned before the household





*A South Sea Royalty.*



## Queen Makae—Jacky

tribunal, and ignominiously dismissed from office. She was a resourceful girl, however. The Union steamer *Richmond* was in port at the time, *en route* for Tahiti. Jacky dried her tears on the second mate's shirt-front, and begged for a passage—which was granted.

She reached Tahiti in time for the French national *fête*, and, her reputation having preceded her, was duly lionised. Meanwhile in Rarotonga things went from bad to worse. Makae missed the cheerful buzz of Jacky's sewing-machine. Namaru couldn't find his shirt-studs. A message of pardon was sent, and Jacky—who had been experimenting in epaulettes in Papeete—was duly recalled. Joy—repentance—floods of happy tears!

Since then Jacky has had many more flirtations with Augustus Fitzgerald, but has contrived to keep the eleventh commandment serenely through them all. There is no talk of her moving now. She has become an institution.

Talk about institutions—if names go for anything, Rarotonga has got plenty of them. After leaving Makae's we visited the hospital—a wooden structure buried deep in flowers at the side of a grassy creek. There is a hospital board of course, also a school board, a town board, and a bored inspector of streets.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

It is positively delicious—this panoply of high-sounding titles on a tiny coral reef in mid-ocean. It is lovely to see a commissioner-general in corduroys and braces. It is beautiful to see a prince in pyjamas—or a lady mayoress flying downhill on her bicycle, her solitary muslin shift well up to her knees, and her straw hat bobbing ignominiously over her shoulders. It is exquisite to see a host of vague officials with titles as long as a cathedral spire squabbling learnedly over questions which any dusty jam-stealing lower-middle “fag” would effectively settle in the corridor between “prep” and beer-fight,

Ah, those blessed days of islandism! when, with the warm tropic breezes caressing our senses, and the chatter of sleepy *vahines*<sup>1</sup> droning lazily through the palm-stems, we fondly imagined ourselves the centre of the universe, and our little coral-dab the hub round which the wheel of Destiny revolved. Foolish — foolish — foolish dream!

On coming out of the hospital I noticed what seemed like clusters of amber-coloured drops clinging to the wooden ceiling. On nearer inspection they turned out to be something as beautiful, but much more terrifying—viz., swarming masses of hornets, big enough and venomous

<sup>1</sup> Girls.

## Officialism

enough to kill a horse if one of those ill-used quadrupeds chanced to offend their dignity. They build anywhere and everywhere, and in the winter months (June to August) they become a positive terror. Efforts have been made of late in some of the larger islands to suppress them by offering money rewards for the nests—but the preliminary thousand francs scared the French Government, and the plan was abandoned. The plague is all the more aggravating for the reason that the hornets are Kanaka hornets, and with the exception of buzzing and stinging, do no manner of work. I can only unearth one solitary case in which they have been known to play a part in the economy of things—and it brings me to the adventures of a man whose name flares in the Rarotonga archives like a magnesium rocket along a reef of blue-fires—A. B. Voss, Esq.

A. B. Voss was a politician of the old school. He came to Rarotonga for the purpose of reforming it and saving it from perdition. He held advanced views, and the fact that the island was not big enough to contain them in no ways damped his ardour. He wanted to rinse the Augean stables. He wanted English laws—compulsory education. The mother-tongue was to be taught in the schools, cane in one hand, Bible in the other. On paper this sounded mag-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

nificent, but the Kanakas didn't take kindly to the new régime, and discontent grew apace.

With the election of a new hospital-board trouble came to a head. There had been a vast deal of fussing about "trusts" and "committees" in all quarters lately, and Voss's discriminating snobbery had wakened the spectre of jealousy in the hearts of the simple-minded long-shore loafers. The meeting was to be held in Osana (Hosanna) Hall—a ramshackle structure of stone and shingle close to Makae's. It was a grilling day in December, and the electors came with curses not loud but deep.

Voss came in his war-paint. Two doctors had recently been appointed without his consent, and the uncertainty of which way their professional zeal would be directed filled him with jealous dread.

The meeting was modelled on strictly European lines. The members were ranged in a stuffy semicircle. Voss—drops of sweat gemming his patrician forehead—glowered darkly over his blotting-pad and glass of water.

The balloting began. Voss divined that his opponents were too strong for him. He called order, stood up and made a bullying speech. Presently—while in the act of speaking—a sight met his gaze that brought fury with it. The

## Officialism

opposing side had set two scrutineers to watch the ballot-boxes. The lid of Voss's safety-valve blew off.

"*Haré!*" he said fiercely to the coloured worthies, while the members grinned audibly. "Mr. Vice, I demand an explanation. Remove those men."

"Do nothing of the sort," said the leader of the opposite side coolly—"stay where you are, gentlemen."

Voss's shirt-collar swelled. He strode to the door. "Police!" he shouted.

Two half-caste Kanakas in shirts and frayed knickerbockers ambled sleepishly in.

"Arrest those men," said Voss shortly, indicating the scrutineers.

The Kanakas hesitated. The scrutineers looked able to take care of themselves, and some of the anti-Vossites were getting ready for action. Voss stamped. The members laughed approvingly.

Voss broke away into a speech, great beads of perspiration rolling down his cheeks. "All those in favour of law and order clear to side of hall," he bawled. The members separated, leaving Voss standing by himself on the side opposed to law. What a roar of vulgar laughter there was! Voss was on the verge of madness.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Ha! An idea! Inside the locker on which he was supposed to be sitting was a rolled-up Union Jack, destined for festival use. Even the rowdiest of Englishmen is bound to respect his flag. The Union Jack once unfurled, order would be assured.

He pulled open the lid of the locker and waved the flag in the air. Horrors! From the folds of cloth something brown fell with a thud on the floor—broke—took wings and resolved itself into the deadliest swarm of stinging yellow hornets ever seen this side of Purgatory!

That finished the hospital-board question. There was a general stampede. With one accord the members made for the door. Voss made his exit last, flicking frantically at his irate foes with the dishonoured flag. The meeting was adjourned.

And now I pray, if any one should be disposed to unduly malign those yellow terrors of the island jungle—let their charitable act in settling Voss's electoral hash be taken into consideration, and let them be judged leniently.



## CHAPTER V

### MISSIONARY LAW—RAHERI'S DIPLOMA

“ On visionary schemes debate  
To snatch the Rajahs from their fate,  
So let them ease their hearts with prate  
Of equal rights.”

JUST lately an event of some importance has taken place in Rarotonga—viz., the revision of the old missionary laws by Mr. Gudgeon. It is with misgivings that I touch on the subject at all. If there be anything I loathe more than anything else in a book of travel it is to come across a detailed account of law-codes or political questions. To begin with, it has an offensively, priggishly learned appearance ; secondly, it is apt to be very dry, and the reader who wishes to be merely amused, and who naturally makes a point of shunning useful or instructive information wherever it presents itself, simply skips it, with or without a malediction.

Such were my ideas—till I landed in Rarotonga and had the splendours of old missionary law revealed to my wondering gaze. My intentions faltered. My sense of humour was wiser

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than my head. I decided to lay aside prejudice and grip the matter by the beard. It repaid me—for it was very funny.

And who made these fantastic old laws? Whoever he was, he had a strong appreciation of the ridiculous, a scant smattering of pathos, and as much ordinary humanity as a mud-dredge. Here are a few culled at random from the *Ioi Korangi*—the Avarua weekly paper.

The first one breathes a stern puritanical morality worthy of Gilbert's *Mikado*.

“Sec. V. Any one found walking after dark, their arm round a woman's waist, *without a light*—five days' imprisonment.”

The lantern is the saving element here you see—maidens take note.

“Sec. VI. Any one found weeping over the grave of a woman not related to him—five days' imprisonment.”

Sounds a bit apocryphal at first, doesn't it? Oh—I see—of course. No one would be likely to weep over a dead black lady unless he and she had cherished immoral relations. If the lady were your wife you would be allowed to weep all right, I fancy—but who would weep over a mere wife?

“Sec. VIII. Consulting a sorcerer—three days' imprisonment.”

## Missionary Law

There is a bit of egotism here, I fear. It cannot be merely for the purpose of discouraging a belief in the supernatural—for the latter's existence is in a way the best excuse for the missionary's. No—we shall have to cut the matter finer. It is a question of monopoly. There is only one rightful dealer in supernatural stickjaw in the island—that is, the missionary. Anything else in the same line might mean cessation or depression of business. Avaunt! brother palmist. Juggler with beads—*vade retro Sathanas*.

Now come two delicious bits of humour. They must be read together:—

“Sec. VII. Illicit intercourse with a married woman—ten days.

“Sec. XI. Dynamiting fish in rivers—thirty days!”

This is utilitarianism in its highest sense. Dynamited fish are no use to any one, but the injured lady, though false, may still be fair, and also quite capable of doing her share of work in the taro-field.

Etc., etc. With this impious rubbish staring one out of countenance, can the hatred of which missionaries have at times been the object be wondered at? Can the covert sneers, the coarse jokes, the ridicule with which the trader-element loves to cover those who preach the Gospel in

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

the Pacific be merely the outcome of envy or the malice of naturally depraved imaginations? What are we to think of the ancient blunderbores who framed these laws? Were they men or devils? To see the faith of Christ inculcated by means of bribery and money-gifts is foolish and fantastic enough, but—oh, it is wicked to see it grafted on savages with a poleaxe!

Now, after an indecently protracted thirty years' squabble, missionary law has been done away with, and by an Englishman. May it never be revived!

There are several schools in the island, but only one really important one—the Catholic mission, superintended by the sisters of St. Joseph de Cluny. It is unpretentious in design, a long low white-washed building fronting the sea, and surrounded, like every Rarotongan establishment, with a luxuriant flower-garden. It is divided into two wings, one for boys, the other for girls. The majority of the pupils seem to be of native blood, but there were a few unmistakable half-castes, and one genuine English baby of six—a white pearl in a necklace of black.

Just lately the school has suffered a loss. One of the prettiest and most promising of the pupils died of phthisis, under circumstances so peculiarly



*Picking Papaws, Rarotonga.*



## Raheri's Diploma

pathetic that I cannot refrain from giving them in the form of a narrative.

Raheri was born under an unlucky star. It was a shameful case of desertion. For a pure-blooded islander this might have been a thing of little import, but Raheri's mother was a Marquesan half-caste, and quite civilised enough to know the sting of neglect. The child found herself unloved from birth, and as though the mother's woes were working in her blood, grew up a wilful, lonely little atom, with a talent for dancing in strange sunbeams, and an obstinate dislike for human companionship. The neighbours, on the mother's death, refused to adopt her. Vaerua's house had been summarily claimed by the owners, and for a few terrible weeks the child led a wild life in the jungle. Rarotonga is, however, as we have already noticed, not a place to starve in. As the rains came down Raheri crept back to the village, wilder, more savage, more undisciplined than ever. There was a tiny shanty of rudely nailed iron in a banana-clearing at some little distance behind the mission-school. It had really done duty for an outhouse, but now they let Raheri occupy it, together with her two pets—an old yellow tom cat and a disreputable-looking sulphur-tailed cockatoo, of both of whom

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she was inordinately fond. Once Sister Lacey, the mild-eyed Irish girl who taught the three r's in the long white-washed school-building, chanced to pass Raheri's hovel and found the child—it was during the autumn rains—coughing on the damp floor. She went back for a rug, and Raheri's eyes lit with pleasure as she felt the warm fur round her chilled limbs. Then, as the sun drew the mists from the low-lying fields of taro, her wild distrustful nature came back. She balled up the rug and threw it disdainfully out into the mud.

But Sister Lacey persevered. In the end she not only won the child's confidence, but actually succeeded in persuading her to attend school. Raheri didn't take kindly to lessons at first. The strange theories of the white people bred contempt under that tangled mass of hair with its limp flower-wreath. Love can do wonders, however, and little by little the child's aversion was conquered. Raheri learned to write in a great round hand, to spell after a fashion. She ceased believing that the sun came out of a hole in the sea. She likewise learned that England was not a den of unprincipled miscreants, but a great and good country, where men that kick women are publicly pilloried, and where girls wait for teacher's permission before falling in love.



## Raheri's Diploma

Her manners and costume, too, gained by the change. She learned to do up her hair in a ball instead of allowing it to hang loose, to omit the immodest flower-wreath, to speak without shouting—and when a South Sea girl learns to do *that*, you may take it from me that she is in a fair way to becoming civilised.

It was about this time that Raheri's rough winsomeness won her an admirer. Harry "Porotia" was his name. He was a tiny boy enough, and the son of a German trader resident in Rarotonga for his—and his country's—health. One evening he met Raheri in a dark avenue of palms. She had been spending her half-holiday gathering oranges in a hot valley inland, and was in no mood for sentiment. The impromptu declaration did no manner of good. Raheri boxed the boy's ears, and left him sobbing. But this in no way cooled Porotia's ardour. He worshipped Raheri with all the enthusiasm of his ten summers, and was not man enough to conceal the fact.

With the new year a change came for the island. Britannia decreed that Rarotonga must have a new Resident. He came from New Zealand in faultless white ducks and gold buttons galore. There followed a school-inspection as a matter of course, and it brought disaster to Raheri.

The great man and his two daughters came to

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

hear the girls read their lessons. Raheri was absent. Some more than usually flagrant piece of naughtiness had led to ruptures, and she had been peremptorily forbidden to appear in the school-house. The ordeal commenced. The girls were put on reading one by one. The Resident was all attention.

There was a hurried step on the verandah, and a prolonged ah—h—h of admiration from the scholars as something sailed serenely into the class-room and dropped defiantly on a seat.

It was Raheri—and she was decked in all the panoply of Central-Pacific savagery—*toe-rings*, forbidden wreath of *tiaré*, necklace of pine-apple seeds, and rattling bangles all complete, and—horror of horrors!—in her arms yowled and blinked the old cat Mau. Miss Lacey came forward quickly.

“Raheri! What do you mean? Go home at once!”

“Oh, do let her stay, she’s so picturesque!” pleaded the youngest daughter, conscious of her sketch-book at home. Raheri might have stayed but for the next move. One of the scholars, deeming the cat an offender, grabbed the animal by the tail and tried to pull it back. There was an angry snarl and a fuff. Pussy turned and struck smartly at the aggressor’s hand. Raheri

## Raheri's Diploma

bounded up, dealt the boy a ringing box on the ear, seized the cat, and with a shout of contempt, pitched the yellow brute right into the sacred lap of the British Resident !

The great man started, and the motion was too much for the rotten chair. It collapsed, and Britain's honoured representative measured his length on the floor.

"Oh, Atua (God)," prayed poor Raheri that night in an agony of contrition, "make me a better girl, Atua. As good as Miss Lacey." Then (as an afterthought), "*Better* than Miss Lacey if you can, Atua."

Fearful of overtaxing the powers of the Deity, Raheri cried herself to sleep. Pardon was many days in coming ; but time heals all things, and in due course Vaerua's child was again allowed to continue her studies.

The months wore on, and Porotia's boy-love ached in silence. He was very small and insignificant, and Raheri, save when there was any pilfering to be done, hardly found time to notice him. With the speeding months, too, came the first footmarks of the foe—the burning restlessness of the eyes, the aggravated fits of coughing, the straining for breath in the hot windless nights, when the stars quivered dizzily between the ink-splotted palms, and the waves were too weary to talk.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Not so Raheri. The fire of work had entered the wayward little head, and the lithe fingers were busy from morning till night. The term was drawing to a close, and with it neared the great final examination—the proudest moment of an island-girl's life—when the long ribboned certificate would be handed her by the teacher, when she would step through the school gates—the plaudits of her classmates in her ears, and womanhood, with its soft mysteries and glorious promises, shining on her path in a cloud-land of rosy fire.

Raheri worked—but the Grey Things of the wilderness, the *toupapahus* that haunt the swamp and rice-field, were beckoning with thin, wasted fingers. The child was growing feebler from day to day, and the ominous catching of the breath as she bent over the long bench struck terror to the hearts of the teachers.

A consultation was held, one hot day on the verandah. There was a kindly man waiting to interview Raheri as she came from the class-room swinging her satchel on her arm, and the verdict—though delivered with bated breath—sent a boy who had been hiding behind the flower-bushes speeding into the twilight with a storm of sobs.

Raheri was moved from her iron rabbit-hutch into the vacant house of a missionary. She was

## Raheri's Diploma

very pale and thin, and preferred studying full-length on a heap of mats to sitting on those long hard benches. They would have stopped her studies altogether and sent her to hospital, but Raheri had the certificate in view, and—the doctor knew it to be a question of days.

It only lacked a week to the examination when the final warning came—the wail of a voice fighting for air between the lattice and the ringing darkness. Miss Lacey spent all the night by the sufferer, and next day—

Next day the school set to work on a labour of love. The pretty page of snow-white vellum with its border of coloured flowers, Raheri's name—beautiful in its neat lettering—and the pendant ribbons that set off the whole in a fluttering framework. They were short of ribbons in Rarotonga just then, so Miss Lacey tore them from a favourite dress of hers, and cried as she did so. Work as they would, it was midnight before the trophy was finished. The certificate was signed and dated. Raheri had not passed the exam., of course—but there was no time to think of that now, and the hearts of the school ached lest the Grey Things might claim their own before the message of love reached their playmate.

It was nearly two in the morning when the teacher set off for Raheri's dwelling. A score of

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

eager children were waiting to accompany her, but Miss Lacey thought it wiser to dismiss them and go alone. As she reached the steps of the verandah something—it might have been an animal—rose and slunk away in the underbrush. She entered the hot room and felt about for a light. There was none forthcoming. The oil in the lamp had given out, and the match-box was empty. Failing, she fell on her knees beside the couch, and with a burst of tender words put the certificate into Raheri's wasted hands.

It was some moments before the child understood her happiness. When she did, life returned momentarily in a flood of joy.

“Eha!” she said with a quick gasp of delight, “but it is broad and decked with splendid ribbons—like Dolly Mapue's—of a truth I can feel the lettering. Would it were day! Stay with me, Sister Lacey.”

“I shall stay, Raheri dear.”

A paroxysm of gasping and coughing interrupted her. The child struggled for breath, and her thin fingers closed like a vice on the teacher's hand. Recovering, she took the roll of paper and pressed it again and again to her lips.

“Would it were light!” she wailed; “it is dark here—so dark, and the night has been so long. Is the dawn coming, Sister Lacey?”

## Raheri's Diploma

"It is coming, Raheri dear—fast." Fast indeed. The howling waters have well-nigh shattered the frail skiff. It is all but sinking. From outside, the roar of the sea came to them faintly through the inter-crossing palm stems. The Grey Things were very near now.

"Raheri—can you say a prayer, do you think?"

The thin lips moved—but made no sound. The teacher bent till her face almost touched the matted, damp hair, and whispered some words in the child's ear.

"E tuu noa te tamarii—Raheri, darling, speak to me."

"E tuu noa te tamarii——"

"E haere mai——"

"E haere mai——"

And then, while the strong woman knelt and wept, the frail child—clinging to those fair words of promise as a drowning man to a spar—glided out into the sleep that knows no waking till the darkness gives place to everlasting light.

When, on the following morning the two Kanaka mutes came to bear away the tiny body, the foot of one trod a draggled bunch of violets that had been lying all night on the steps—where the boy-love of Porotia had breathed its humble and last farewell.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ISLE OF FAIR WOMEN

“Where summer years and summer women smile.”

WE left Rarotonga in a hurry. It is part of a Union skipper's profession to *be* in a hurry—all zeal—as Mr. Midshipman Easy found his superior officer's blasphemy.

We are now fairly in the tropics. Whatever may be the case in other parts of the world, the change of climate on this particular run is sudden enough to be very funny.

It is the eighteenth parallel that does the trick. One goes to sleep dreaming of cool breezes and rain—one wakes to find the crew in white ducks, and the butter running like paraffin. The wind, too, has taken on a more sultry feel, and the violent orange glare seems to have calmed the waves down to the consistency of oil. In the engine-room the stokers are beginning to weep, and when you take your morning's constitutional the liquefied pitch of the deck-seams sticks to the soles of your tennis-shoes and trips you up. The eighteenth is the most playful of parallels.



## The Isle of Fair Women

An odd 300 miles of sea separates the Society Islands from the Cook Archipelago. Moorea is the first to appear—the shadowiest of shadows on the eastern horizon—so vague and evanescent that they might well pass for clouds. Union officers make poor liars, however. As you are girding up your loins to doubt the fact of any land being visible, the dark bank ahead splits up into a collection of blue pinnacles—so weird and unpractical-looking as to pass for the dream of a delirious *absintheur* rather than the staid and sober result of natural laws.

One of the peaks has a remarkable defect. It is perforated close to its summit—an undeniable tunnel chiselled as neatly in the wind-scoured rock as though the primæval architect had done it with dynamite and stone-chisel.

The tunnel has its legend. Rumour says that some island-hero threw his spear through the peak in a fit of—well—boredom. *Si non è vero, è ben trovato*. History does not relate what this fellow's name was, nor to what particular scandal he owed his reputation. One thing only is certain about him—he was a very bad hero indeed. None but a thoroughly bad deity could ever have done a piece of work like that. Good deities never work. It takes them all their time to be good. This is why, in Ireland, the Devil

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

claims all the punch-bowls, in Germany the *poltergeist* all the historic villas, in Scandinavia Loki all the earthquakes, and in India Shiva all the brains. Strange, but true.

And now Moorea is on our beam—a diabolical silhouette framed in the yellow of the sinking sun. Voices are answering each other from the bridge. There comes the clang of hidden bells. Stand by! You rush to the other side of the ship and—lo!—Tahiti, the *nouvelle Cythère* of Bougainville, the “island of beautiful women” of the old explorer De Quiros, lies before us in her bridal veil of cloud, reef-girdled, her haughty diadem of mountains bathed in the magic of the rising moon—a Queen of the Sea, faint and voluptuous as the breath from her own flower-chalices.

As we near the shore the isolated forms of women are visible under the dark trees—a shadowy counterpoise to the white reflections of the vessels anchored in the harbour. The sound of the cathedral bell mingles weirdly with the clank of the capstan, and the faint twinkle of the shore-lamps is drowned in warm gusts of steam from the winches.

There is no trace of a pier. The *Ovalau* simply draws up along the crescent of coral, whose grassy fringe comes right down to the

## The Isle of Fair Women

water's edge. There was a motley crowd assembled on the bank, and the adjustment of the gangway was the signal for an army of girls to tumble on board. I had long heard of the proverbial skittishness of Tahitian ladies, and was prepared to find a rampaging army of fiends. I fell to scrutinising them curiously—much as Parsifal might have scrutinised the flower-maidens. I rubbed my eyes. How quiet they were—how demure! No noisy tin-kettly Americanisms here—no racy *Austrian* chaff, no—not even a wink or a Society smile. Willowy sedateness, the dignity of island-womanhood haloed in its own cigarette smoke—the modesty of Niobe untouched by the censuring eye of the Lord Chamberlain—strolling to and fro under the soft electrics, with barely a look or a gathering-in of the skirts to acknowledge your presence—the dear innocents!

There, that will do. Why—why did I not vanish downstairs before the fair vision fled? Why should that extra five minutes' curiosity have brought about such a fell awakening?

Alas! I had still to learn the truth of the adage, *Est modus in rebus*. There was a sudden flash of light in the engine-room doorway; a brawny sailor, his bare arms streaked with coal-dust, sprang out on deck, and walking unceremoniously

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

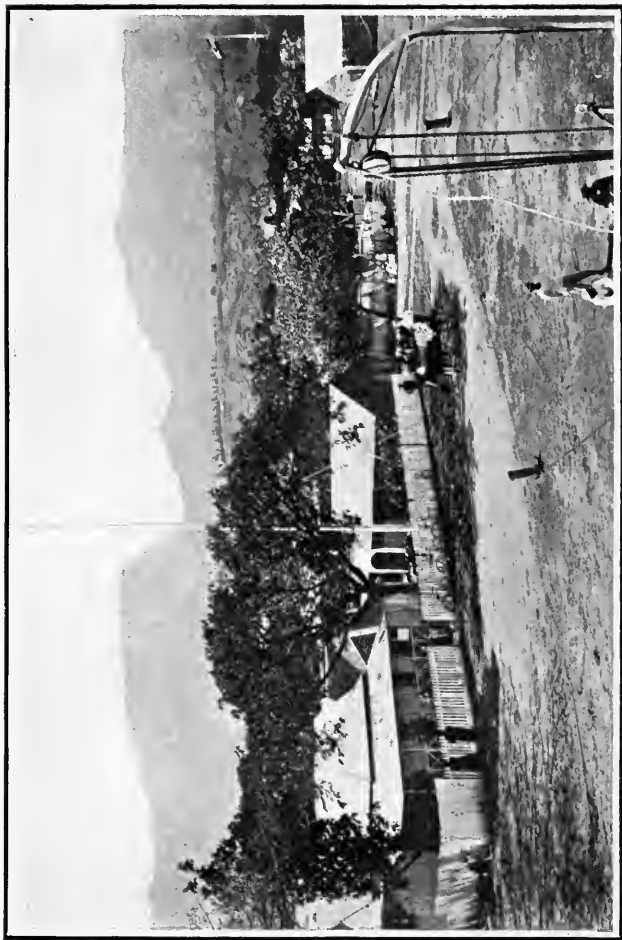
up to the nearest girl, caught that demure damsel round the waist, and——

Let us draw the curtain. After all my poetry too! You naughty, treacherous, deceitful little minx. Not a scream, not a word of rebuke, not a single solitary quiver of outraged modesty. Alas for my ideals!

“Oh shame, oh sorrow, and oh womankind!”

Papeete (from *Pape-ete*, a basket of water) is by no means a representative South Sea capital. It is second only to Honolulu in jumbledom. Within the few square miles composing the district are stuffed heterogeneous colonies of Chinamen, Atiu islanders, Mangaian, Marquesans, &c. The European element is nearly as mixed as the native, and the weird way in which each section of the social element has contrived to absorb the nationality of the next imparts a flavour of gummy fraternity to the whole. When we come to look into social matters in detail, we shall see how this works. Viewed from the harbour the town presents the appearance of a straggling collection of villas, a row of pointed-roofed warehouses, and a sea of green and red foliage, with the white cathedral spire topping everything like a toothpick.

The following morning being Sunday I had a good opportunity of seeing the town in its best



*Papeete, from the Sea.*



## The Isle of Fair Women

dress. Even as London has its Row, New York its Fifth Avenue, Venice its Rialto, and Melbourne its Block, so Papeete has its market. The fashionable hour is a godless one—5 A.M.—but it is your only chance of salvation. You must make the best of it. All the islands are in fact at their loveliest before sunrise.

The sun was fringing the top of Orofena—which stands out above the town like a monstrous blue shark-fin—as I passed up the lane of sycamores to where instinct and the hum of voices told me the market was placed. Right and left were Chinese stores, with strings of pendant drapery and piled-up bars of soap. Farther on there was an eating-house, where two industrious Chows were rattling their beads (Chinamen use the abacus to count with), and a score of lively ladies in pink were absorbing coffee in an atmosphere of fried bread and coconut oil. I was in the market.

It is an oblong square shaded by sycamores and scarlet flamboyants, and set off in the centre by a shabby green tank half filled with duckweed. On one side is the Mairie, a low building of wood with a fine display of plate-glass; on the other a row of open pillared sheds—an obvious plagiarism of the Paris *Halles*—where fish are being sold in strings.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

How paint the strange effects of colouring—the scarlet-blossomed covering of trees, the rows of gaily dressed women squatting behind heaps of exotic fruits, the bunches of parti-coloured fish dangling from poles, the fantastically painted signs above the Chinamen's stores, the rows of tiny flags (it is some festival day), and over all the pale gold of the early sun and the dreamy blue of the mountains!

There are about five hundred people collected, I should judge. The general scheme of the costumes resembles that of Rarotonga—though a trifle more elaborate. The flowing skirt of pale blue or pink, the dark trailing hair, the necklace of berries, and the hat of thinnest straw with the wreath of delicately scented flowers twisted round the brim. Amiability is the rule here—especially towards the stranger. Three sailors in blue calico with square collars greet me good-morning. A pretty girl carrying a scarlet fish by a string grins suggestively. I am admiring the artificial straw flowers on her hat, and she is fully conscious of the fact. A Kanaka passes smiling with a heavy basket—marketing for his wife at home like a dutiful husband. Then come three girls arm in arm. One of them wickedly jogs my elbow. “Hallo, mis'nary” (missionary), she says.



## The Isle of Fair Women

Incidentally I learn that "missionary" is the term of contempt or approval applied to any young man whose morals are above listening to the overtures of Tahitian beauty. This argues well for the missionaries, although some people say—well, never mind.

Here one may get acquainted with a few of the local celebrities. M. Cardella, mayor of Papeete; Prince Hinoi Pomaré, the sole surviving something-or-other; the Branders, university men and cousins of the late queen; M. Rey, the governor, in his dog-cart—and a host of female celebrities of all shades of morality and colour. A goodly percentage of the latter are demurely bargaining for coco-nuts, while others, leaning coquettishly against the railings, appear to be—*more juventutis*—simply flirting. Every township under the sun has its perihelion of giddiness, but yours, O lovely Papeete, begins earlier than any of them.

And how magnificently the streets of this same Papeete lend themselves to pictorial effect! Verily, all styles of art are here represented. The scheme of things lends itself to the brush of all the masters. The long leafy crypts belted with yellow shafts of sunlight might have haunted the mind of a Rembrandt. Among the tiny cottages with their broad flower-decked verandahs and army of

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

strutting fowls, Hokusai might find congenial inspiration. Your picture builds itself gradually, the product of a new, ever-changing impressionism, and you dream of lacquered tea-work till the drifting smoke of a bonfire mingles the colours in transparent fog, and lo!—you have a Whistler.

Besides being the most picturesque, Papeete is likewise the shadiest capital extant. Not a street is devoid of its double row of trees, which meet overhead to form a sort of leafy cloister impervious to the very hottest sunshine. And who planted these trees? Certainly not the French. Nor yet the Pomarés, whose disused and dishonoured palace in the Rue de Rivoli is now a depository for empty packing-cases and decadent sweetmeat-vendors. Who then? The trees are manifestly old—the gnarled giants of the Fautaua avenue, for instance, can count quite three hundred summers—and Tahitian history (luckily for the Tahitian schoolboy) doesn't reach back as far. Who built the tombs of Easter Island? Who built the Sphinx, the Colossus of Rhodes, the pyramids of Colhuacan? Ask of the winds. For the men that fought at Minden were pilgrims through the unborn seas of time when the ancient line of kings sowed the foundations of those grand avenues. Their names are lost to posterity. They have died and made no sign.

## The Isle of Fair Women

Shelter for the man, a stable for the horse. We must see about housekeeping details. Let us go and consult Mr. Raoulx. He is a very amiable obliging old fellow and one of the political props of Papeete. Yes, a friend of his, Madame D., has several houses on her hands. No doubt she will accommodate us. But mind—no noise after 10 P.M. The Papeete police are a bloodthirsty lynx-eyed set of miscreants, and longing to put an Englishman in prison.

We start off along the shady street to where, behind the closed lattices of a tall modern-looking house, Madame D.'s daughter is practising a Czerny exercise on her piano. Yes, for fifty francs a month the house is ours. Madame D. likewise informs us that she never (with a capital N) prys into or occupies herself with what goes on at people's houses. This means we can be as wicked as we like—which is charming.

House rent is not dear in Tahiti, you see, and the "remittance man," as Society so prettily terms him, can live, for a very small sum, monarch of all he surveys. This usually includes a four-roomed cottage with latticed verandah, an out-house with a water-tap which acts at intervals, and a garden fifteen yards square, with bastard coffee-bushes and mangoes. Plaited pandanus, the time-honoured roof-thatch of the Pacific, has

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

gone out of fashion, and in many houses the abominable iron contrivance has crept in instead. Unless one is lucky enough to get under the shade of a branching tree this simply means getting roasted out. Don't look too closely at things. Tahitian architecture is essentially slipshod, and the majority of the doors won't shut. This doesn't matter, however, as money is not very valuable in the Societies, and no one will bother to steal it.

In fact, money, as a means of getting what one wants, is almost unknown in Papeete. Kanakas cannot be paid to work. You will find this out soon enough when you try to engage servants. To any one who has been merely brought up in the ordinary way, among the niggardly, hardly earned fleshpots of Europe, the problem of living entirely without an occupation of any kind is naturally apt to be a stickler. Yet one need not go as far as Tahiti to find such a state of things. I remember once while touring through Italy (it was in Naples) I tried to engage a porter to carry my trunk from the boat to the hotel. I was told porters were always to be had on the landing for a small sum. I went down to the quay. Sure enough, a dozen picturesque ragamuffins were lolling in the sun. I timidly stirred one of them up and stated my requirements. The man looked me over from head to foot, grunted,



*Place de l'Ancienne Prison, Papetia.*



## The Isle of Fair Women

passed his hand weakly over his stomach, and—

“ I have eaten,” he said with a smile.

And as the Neapolitans are, so are the Kanakas. No Kanaka will work unless he is hungry, and as bread-fruit and faies are common property in this lovely island, the chance of such a favourable state of things turning up is rare. Just suggest to that lanky chocolate-coloured individual lying so nonchalantly on the grass with his straw hat turned over his eyes, that he should come and be your bond-slave for pay! He has the Neapolitan independence and the pride of a Spaniard from Aragon balled together in his fell carcass. Try a girl. Here, if you are a young man and a professional lover of the sex, you will probably be more successful. Even then she will “size you up” before accepting your offer, as a booky sizes a race-horse, and should the cut of your coat or the colour of your eyes displease her—woe! You will have to do your sweeping yourself.

Kanaka servants are the most unsatisfactory on earth. Time, place, the binding power of a promise are alike dead letters to them. The only thing that goes regularly about them is their tongue. They are the champion scandal-mongers of creation. Hardly have one's toes touched the grass of Papeete quay than the news of one's

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

arrival, and the possible complications which may or may not have led to it, become public property. Good report spreads slowly, but bad flies like wild-fire. Within four hours of your landing one will be credited with having deserted one's wife, conspired against the British Government, burned, forged, stolen, murdered—all the horrors of a diseased savage imagination. There is no use in objecting. It is part of the programme.

When the late British Consul, Mr. Hawes, reached Papeete for the first time, he made acquaintance with this unpleasant fact. The Consulate is a very pretty villa, with neat iron railings and hanging creeper-fronds. Hawes entered it gaily. Besides being an English Consul, he had a hobby. He was an amateur musician of sorts, and loved playing on the trombone. That evening a crowd collected outside the Consulate, and Hawes's chromatics being misconstrued, a report became bruited about Papeete that her Majesty's representative was in the habit of sacrificing pigs to the setting sun—a very cannibalistic proceeding. Twenty-four hours later a friend found Hawes sitting thoughtfully on an empty canoe looking at the sea. Explanation was unnecessary.

“Come, come, my dear fellow,” said the friend, “we've all got to put up with these little grievances.”



## The Isle of Fair Women

"I *won't* put up with them," contended Hawes.

"What are you going to do?"

"Build a wall round the Consulate."

Hawes was as good as his word. The trombone episode was explained away, and when next Papeete sought a pretext for scandal it was compelled to draw entirely on its imagination.

## CHAPTER VII

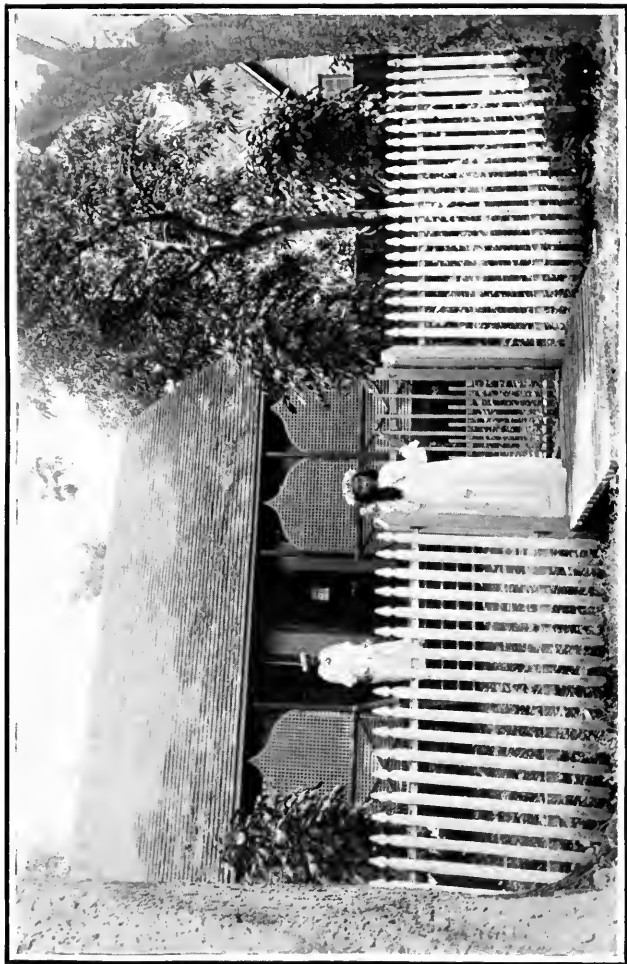
### CHINAMEN—MILITARY—“VI ET ARMIS”

“And in that city every clime and age  
Jumbled together.”

—*The Princess.*

Now we have got our house. Food will be the next difficulty. A man who values life and its blessings should never try housekeeping in Tahiti. Kanaka service makes people prematurely old. A couple of restaurants engineered by Frenchmen offer decent fare. Should the food in the said establishments displease one, there is, as last resource, the Chinaman's.

There are three hundred Chinamen in Papeete. Their arrival was a romance in itself. Forty years ago, when the great Atimaono cotton plantation was in full swing, the speculators cast about for labour, and, recognising the uselessness of expecting anything from the Kanaka population, hit upon the plan of importing Chinamen from Tonkin. The idea was a luminous one, and regally carried out. Three hundred Chows, each sitting on his own tea-chest, were carted Tahiti-



*A Remittance-man's Dwelling.*



## Chinamen

wards and dumped ashore on the quay to work, sin, and suffer "allege same Clistian."

For a while things went swimmingly. The cotton-trade forged ahead, the Chows were content with their wages, and the easy life was congenial to them. Then came the crash. War broke out in America, and cotton fell to zero. The Chinamen were thrown out of work. Had they been Kanakas they would have solaced themselves playing accordions, or dancing hoolas. But the wily Celestial is made of more dogged stuff. The unemployed Chinaman took matters by the beard, built houses, washed, traded, and established stores. Among the indolent, lotus-eating crowd they rapidly became a power, and at present two-thirds of the commerce of the island is directly or indirectly controlled by them.

Where would Papeete be without the Chow? Whether it is a scratch meal, a straw hat, a packet of cigarettes, a pareo to cover one's undress beauty, or (for matrimonial agencies are not unknown even in these flower-girt isles) a wife.—nine cases in ten, the Chinaman is one's best friend.

He is gentle, affable, scrupulously honest. Nay, he even has a trick of giving overweight, which, to those who are used to the dealings of the superior and cultivated Eurasian, is a per-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

petual source of surprise. As a restaurateur he has qualities of his own. If he were just a little more cleanly in his habits, a little less addicted to mixing soot, dish-rag, and chewed cigar-stumps with his viands, John would make a very tolerable host. His temples are not on a gorgeous scale. Let us enter one of them—Yet Lee's—in the neighbourhood of the market. It is a damp, vaulty place, set with rows of ghostly tables and spotty table-cloths. A pile of newly baked loaves is reposing on a dresser among an interesting assortment of bottles and dirty soup-plates. A score of French sailors and longshoremen are noisily rattling their forks at the far end of the vault. Three Kanakas are moodily loafing round the door. What are you going to get to eat? The earthy smell pervades everything. You stare idly (it is wonderful how soon the climate begins to tell even on the most energetic) at the half-filled bottles of claret—not above suspicion of watering—the diminutive cold-cream pots full of milk, the slices of purple taro, and the plates of water-cress among the chatties and broken-stoppered vinegar-cruets.

Hulloa! A vahine in pink, her hat coquettishly smothered in straw embroidery, takes her seat opposite you, smiling sweetly. You are lucky if she doesn't ask you to pay for her lunch, for



*Marketing, Papeete.*





## Chinamen

modesty in such trifling matters is a vice unknown, and the timid man is at a vast discount in the Islands.

Chinamen are a hard-working set of sufferers. Look at that almond-eyed, lotus-worshipping son of Confucius yonder—him they call "Kitty." There are few girlish suggestions about his antique, be-raddled, cloth-draped, pig-tailed homeliness—only the quavering cynicism of a mind that has known better days, and the wrinkles of a thousand lonely miseries.

"Kitty, darling—Kitty, dear boy—aita te waina?" (lit. is there no wine?) The meal commences. A cool draught from the dripping gutter outside mingles with the wavy motion of the street and the gleam of piled flour-sacks in the store opposite. Two cutlets swimming in grease make their appearance—a plate of salad with the marks of Kitty's celestial thumb festooning the edge like lacework, a small soap-dish containing squash and a couple of pancakes made from a disused bicycle-tire.

If you are fastidious you can eke out the meal with rice and chili vinegar—a cheerful respite from those dread cutlets—anyhow you can console yourself with the reflection that while the activity of sight-seeing lasts, indigestion is not likely to set in.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Addio, Kitty. The cost of our visit is but twenty cents (7d.), and it has given us an insight into the utility of the Chow, which we won't forget in a hurry.

Besides his utilitarian talents, the Chinaman also has his romantic side. These "Tinitos" are confirmed woman-killers. The most raddled, mouldy, coppery, elephant-hided, rat-tailed of them can command his "posse" of sweethearts. They are the policemen of Polynesia.

With what ingenuous presents of scraps of silk, cigarettes, cakes of soap, and tiny paper fans are they ready to charm the heart of Terii or Tumata! The peculiar cast of mind of the Tahitian vahine, shaping itself, as it does, on the existing circumstances and requirements of her brush-clad island, assures easy conquest to the Chow. Her ignorance of money is the vahine's weakness and glory. What chance has a mere Englishman with a rent-roll of £10,000 a year against that urbane smile that advances to the siege of Terii's heart with a two-dollar dress for grapnel and a pocketful of cigarettes for scaling-ladder? None whatever. In fact, if you happen to possess a friend who imagines himself a woman-killer and needs taking down—send him to Tahiti. It doesn't matter who he is—send him to Tahiti. He will get taken down all right.

## Chinamen

And the last state of that man will be better than the first.

Chinamen in Papeete also play the rôle of barbers. In the Rue de Petit-Pologne (how strangely incongruous these idiotic French names sound!) there is quite a colony of these worthies. Their stock-in-trade is inexpensive but convincing. Almost the sole furniture is a gaudy gold-framed mirror, a rickety washstand, and a pile of greasy New York papers to pass the time while your tormentor skins you. I once got shaved at a Chinaman's. I did it for the sake of an experience—which I got. The price was microscopic, five cents including doing your hair. It was very interesting at first, and there was a breezy *sans-gêne* about the rakes of High-Kee's razor which lulled my soul into sympathetic nonchalance. He finished shaving me, and started to do my hair. He produced a comb. I eyed it mistrustfully. It was long, yellow, with half its teeth missing, and the remainder choked with the accumulated sweepings of a million infidel scalps. A weird chuckle came from the door, where a committee of Kanaka loafers were apparently enjoying the scene. I turned to rebuke one of them, and as I did so I saw something on his head that made me shrink up like a telescope. I rose from my chair and prepared to depart.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

I told him he needn't mind combing my hair. I explained that I was in the habit of going about untidy—rather liked it, in fact. He said that would make two cents less. I said I would be generous and overlook the fact. I paid him the full five cents, and from that day to this High-Kee doesn't see me passing his shop without salaaming. He thinks me the noblest of beings.

But—hark!—the cry is “soldiers.” Was there ever a country where the military are not adored? The curious faces of almond-eyed ladies peer through the lattices. In the eating-houses the vahines desert their plates of taro, wipe their brown fingers in the table-cloth, and hurry out to get a view. Here they come—a squadron or so, all told, neat and tidy in their white helmets, but with a certain unshavenness about the chin, and a certain hang-dog stoop in the shoulders that our own Tommies would rise above. A decent, orderly set of men on the whole, with their baby officer strutting in front like a gamecock. A little bit of France in miniature.

Papeete is, in fact, a fortified city. The small sluggish stream dividing it from its disreputable suburb Patutoa is lined with baby ramparts. What are they there for? Æsthetically speaking, smothered as they are in hibiscus and flowering ti-tree, they are very pretty. Strategically,

## Military—"Vi et Armis"

about as effective as a towel-horse. But they are only on a par with the rest of the idea. Not for one blissful instant are you permitted to forget the atmosphere of militarism that hangs over the island. The very landing-stage, where old dis-used cannon take the place of mooring-posts, breathes mute remembrance of former conflicts. In the dim hours of the morning it is the call of trumpets, echoing with Wagnerian suggestions across the glassy water, that rouses you from slumber. In the afternoons there are marchings, counter-marchings, bugle-practice in the leafy nullahs where the banana-fronds fight the lantana as certain upright souls combat parasites—hopelessly. Through the sunny vista of trees you catch the flash of gun wheels and the distant bark of commando. At the foot of the soft hills that lead away under their mantle of green to the still blue cloudland of Orofena, loom two portentous barracks. The French model has been closely followed, and but for tropical suggestions of foliage we might imagine ourselves in Neuilly or Meudon. The same stiff railings, magisterial-looking sentry-boxes, green shutters, scarlet-tiled roofs, and square gate-pillars plastered with official "annonces." Yet Tahiti is in no danger of assault. Neither is there anything to be feared from internal revolution. The Kanakas will

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

never be so foolish as to revolt. The very meanest accordion-playing, wife-beating, work-fearing, hymn-singing of them could not be so blind to his interests as all that. Is there any country on the face of the earth where the law of the usurper plays into the hands of the natives in such brotherly fashion? I doubt it. French law is as beautifully drawn up for the protection and emolument of the Papeete market-contingent as it is for the confusion and overthrow of the weird industriously minded foreigner. The Kanaka is required to do anything but work. There is no species of land-tax. Bread-fruit and faies are common property, and people live on tick to an unlimited extent. Lotus-eating in any form pleases the authorities amazingly. As soon as the Kanaka has got to the end of his pasture there will be a kindly *gendarme* waiting round the corner to take him by the hand and lead him to a new one. It is the dream of a Watteau materialised, a Sèvres-china idyl in pareos and kharki—it is Tahiti.

No, there is no danger to be feared in Papeete from internal rioting, but from without there seems just the slenderest possible likelihood of its being stolen one day or another. Not that there is any particular reason why any one should want to steal it. On the contrary, it would undoubtedly pay best to leave lovely Tahiti alone.

## Military—"Vi et Armis"

But some countries love stealing for fun. And this brings us to the history of the most comical military episode of recent years, the Fashoda scare. It was brought under my notice in the following manner :—

I had been lunching at the Louvres Hotel with a friend—a Mr. De Smidt—and had driven out to his country-place, three miles from Papeete, to bathe and spend the afternoon. On reaching his house my host shouted for the servant to take charge of the horse. No one appeared. On investigating matters we found the man—a lanky Kanaka named Tipuna—asleep under a spreading mango in the garden. We stirred him up, and persuaded him to take charge of the horse. He consented grumblingly, but presently on coming from our bathe we found him asleep again—this time under a rose-bush. I was a bit startled, but De Smidt was all sweetness. He re-issued his orders for the horse's welfare, and escorted me into the house. An hour later we were roused from our scientific and literary conversation by the wheezing sound of a Kanaka melody executed at some little distance in the garden. We reconnoitred, and found Tipuna sitting on a tree-stump playing the concertina to an audience of one nut-brown scullery-maid, three cows, and a Brahma hen.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

“Great Scott!” said I petrified, “do these fellows *ever* work?”

“Sometimes,” said my host smiling. “Tipuna once worked for a week.”

“Is that possible?”

“It does seem funny—but there was a girl concerned in it, and—— Come and have a whisky and soda and I’ll tell you all about it.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### A FASHODA IDYLL

“Tahiti never did and never shall  
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.”

—*King John* (French edition).

HER name was Terii Areva, but Terii for short is all that it is necessary to memorise. From a strictly European point of view she was not beautiful, but to Tipuna's eyes she appeared divine. His soul clave to Terii in love.

Terii's people objected to the match. Her father was the hard-working foreman of a vanilla-curing establishment in Papara, and the financial status of his would-be son-in-law was not to his liking. Tipuna did not care for work. He took odd jobs when they presented themselves with credentials, and deserted them in a gentlemanly manner on pay-day when the accumulated wealth of dollars offered prospect of a prolonged loaf. At night Tipuna used to issue forth like a butterfly from its chrysalis, and a scarlet flower stuck behind his ear, play the accordion on the stone rim of the market fountain, while the vahines

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

wriggled and jabbered approval, and the melon-sellers deserted their tables to throw in an occasional chorus.

But Terii's father had no ear for music. Tipuna must work, or hang up and quit. Terii divined this was no mere jest. She slumped down on the mat and wept.

Let Tipuna prove himself capable of even one week's honest work and she was his. Terii screamed and clawed the matting with her nails. Her Eden seemed unapproachable. Nevertheless it came, as follows :—

It began with the hoisting of the tricolor flag on the Nile and Major Marchand's refusal to move. Dame Rumour had exaggerated things with her usual thoughtfulness, and in Papeete people's nerves had been on a quiver for some time past. An awful prodigy of some kind was expected, and it only needed the ravings of a couple of silver-braided French naval officers to set matters by the ears.

Lying in the harbour, in all her majesty of brass and new paint, was the Republican steam schooner *Aubrevilliers*. One evening, an hour after the bang of the six o'clock gun had startled the pigeons from the neighbouring lumber-yards, one of the ship's lieutenants, having ascended the



*Terii Areva.*



## A Fashoda Idyll

bridge to take an observation, reported lights on the horizon.

A homely band of natives may have been fishing by torchlight, or some naughty boys may have kindled a fire on the dark limits of Moorea reef. No matter. Rumour had done its work. Within fifteen minutes the whole town knew that the long-expected catastrophe was at hand. The English were descending on Tahiti! The whole island was going to be murdered in its bed!

The gasoline launch panted hurriedly ashore. The major portion of the officials were either sleeping under their virtuous mosquito-curtains or shaking for drinks at the felt-topped tables of the Cercle Militaire. The stampede commenced. Bugles tooted at each other along the leafy tunnel of the Rue de Rivoli; from her verandah the scared proprietress of the Louvres Hotel saw the gaunt shapes of white-robed squadrons defiling under the sycamores.

The *Aubrevilliers* was possessed of some twenty guns. Fronting the volcanic trident of Moorea lay the little palm-dot of Motu-Iti with its embryo fort and baby powder-magazine. The long shingle-roofed coal stores of Fareute were full of precious combustible. There was also a little matter of £70,000 in the treasury which needed attending to.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

The bugles sounded again—in an ever-increasing crescendo of viciousness. Under the trees of the market the army of Papeete virtue was dancing the hoola-hoola. The news came and they scattered. Trembling fingers dropped their pennies while bargaining for melons. The melon-sellers forgot themselves, gave correct change, and fled like hiving bees. Along the length of the beach-road, from Taone to Papara, beneath the shade of the Fautaua avenue, across the palm-embossed cane-fields of Patutoa, swept that fell bugle-signal. The startled forms of women, crushed coronets of *tiaré* hemming their oily hair, flashed to life under the torches of the soldiery. The roads were choked. “Ua rohia tatou ati” (trouble is coming) wailed the females. From the pretty creeper-clad villas, back of the cathedral, frightened mothers emerged to hurry their offsprings off to places of safety—to the convent of the Holy Sisters in its deep grove of palm, to Vienot’s with its flaming Bougainvillia, to the Carmelites, choked in a maze of dusty coffee-bushes.

The *Aubrevilliers* was lying some little distance from the shore. Now her anchor was got up and two hawsers tautened in the moonlight as she edged inch by inch up to the line of grass and coral. Her guns had to be unshipped and

## A Fashoda Idyll

disposed where they could be worked to better advantage against the invader than from her old-fashioned carriages. A stone's-throw behind the artillery barracks, on a ridge of red ochreous soil, rose a long platform commanding the major portion of the town and lagoon. The guns were to be moved thither. Rails of steel were brought and laid in position. The guns were hoisted and made fast on trucks of riveted iron. As the dawn yellowed the peaks of Moorea, they looked out from the fringe of red earth like so many bee-stings—a truly formidable armament. The man of artillery felt pleased.

With the day the gasoline launch returned. She had been fussing outside the reef all night in the hope of finding the English fleet and defying it. The spray had spattered her neat brass funnel, and the salt bitterness had eaten its way into the hearts of her crew. They were angry and sea-sick. The enemy had not turned up.

But the captain of artillery worked on. Counterfeited energy is often as effective as the genuine article. Should reports of his valour reach Paris it might mean the Legion of Honour and a dozen other shadowy titles. His wife would drive a "carrosse" in the Bois. She would cultivate a society smile, and the catlike way of saying "my dear" peculiar to pettecoated celebrity. She

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

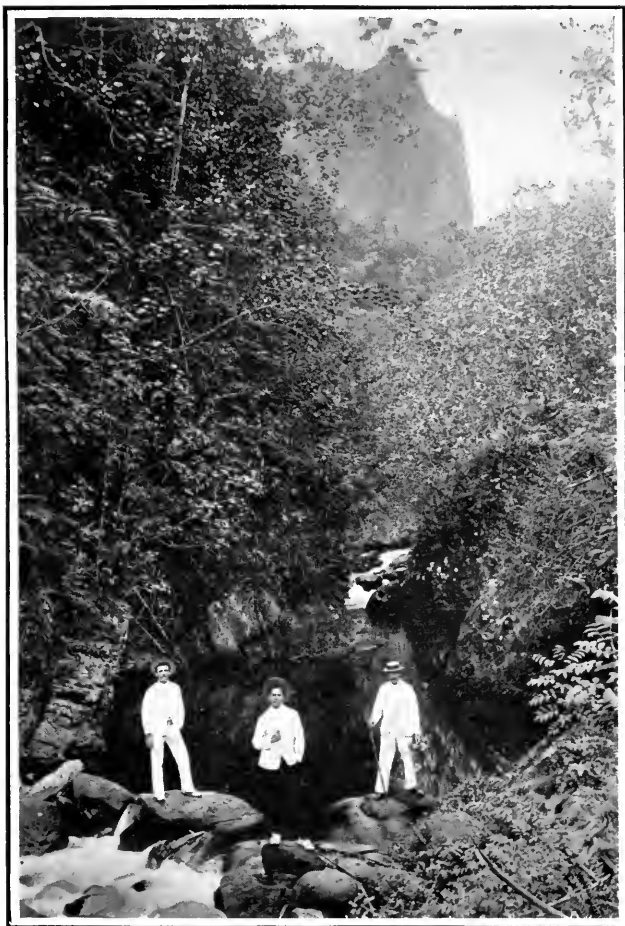
would see her afternoons chronicled in the *Figaro*, and pretty fair-haired *débutantes* would grow green under their layer of *Crème Simon*.

The bugle tootled relentlessly along the Taone road and up the winding pass leading to the defiles of Fautaua, where a rushing ribbon of water binds earth to heaven over an eight hundred foot precipice. The summit of the precipice really marks the site of an ancient fort, for years considered the most impregnable position of the island. The way up is anything but easy, and to further unsettle things a roaring torrent veins the valley at its deepest gulf. The captain of artillery decided that the river must be bridged, and at once.

Labour in Tahiti is none too easily secured. There were a hundred and fifty soldiers, it is true, but they were either busied in the fortifications or in stropping their swords for the expected fray. The sergeants hurried off through the leafy compounds of Mangaia-town, Atiu-town—clear away from Haapape to Faa. Labour must be got at any price, even if they had to whack it to life with the flat of their swords.

Tipuna, the love-lorn, had gone to sleep on an overdose of orange rum and was in no mood for parley. Nevertheless the recruiting-sergeant had winning manners. A dollar a day was not





*Fautana Valley.*



## A Fashoda Idyll

to be despised, and with luck he might manage to evade the really trying portion of the work.

The seedy army of pink-shirted, straw-hatted men moved forward by forced marches to where the river roared under its overhanging fronds of green. The valley rang with the thumps of the pile-driver and the execrations of the foremen. Shafts were sunk in the ooze, and logs of rimau driven into the openings. In the meantime, from higher up the hill where the banana-fronds thickened into a vertical sea of foliage, a girl's face peered down over the army of working bees. Terii, the dust of the road cloying her dark hair, was watching the scene that was to mean matrimony to her—matrimony and honourable love.

The interstices of the logs were filled in, and by the close of the third day two massive pillars defied the stream, but the road leading up to the fort was still unkempt, and a body of soldiers were sent forward with pickaxe and shovel to hack it into something like decency.

Tipuna excelled himself. He had been in the forefront of the pile-driving crowd, and had worked like a nigger. Once, when a heavy log came down on his thumb and nipped it into a jelly, he felt very like throwing up the job—then he thought of Terii, and manhood came back in all its glory. He tied up the finger with a piece of

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

waste, and went on with his work as though nothing had happened. The foreman waxed enthusiastic. "Quel homme! Quelles épaules!" he said.

In Papeete, bellicose yearnings had reached their apogee. In fact they had boiled over. A rumour, that had taken its origin in the gasoline launch's disappointment, now swelled to a roar that deafened the noise of the Fautaua River. It was a sad blow for the poor hard-working French officials to learn that England had changed her mind, and was not coming after all. The project of choking the reef-opening with dynamite torpedoes fell through. In the barracks, infantry officers ceased stropping their sabres and took to betting on the Grand Prix as a substitute. The commander of the *Aubrevilliers* wanted his guns back. Frivolous ladies said they were sick of bugle-practice, and merchant skippers began to hint that the altered beacons, whose positions had been changed for the enemy's benefit, were a nuisance to navigation. The irony of the situation penetrated as far as the Fautaua Valley. The very landscape took on an ironical colouring. The great overhanging comb of green derided the men by day, and the stars, twinkling mischievously between the Magellanic clouds, mocked them by night. Long before the first detach-

## A Fashoda Idyll

ment of horse had paved a way for itself up to the fort, people were beginning to feel ashamed of themselves. Officials were slinking back to their desks. Women gave up praying, and assaulted the schools to have their children back.

Then came the bill. The picnic had lasted ten days. Three hundred Kanakas at a dollar a day run things up. There were expenses to the tune of £5000 against the budget, and save for the bridge and the improved road up to the fort—a boon to future picnickers—no one was a whit the better. There was a general exodus from the valley, and the novel experience of being drunk on the proceeds of real hard work came sweetly, as the blush of first love, to the market population.

Tipuna had worked one whole week. Seven dollars were his by right of contract, but the foreman, taking the crushed finger into account, increased the sum to ten. Tipuna hired a dis-used ambulance-waggon, and with Terii by his side to beguile the moments on a mouth-organ, drove out to Papara to exhibit honourable scars. The cut finger and the ten dollars were proof positive. The old blunderbore of a father scratched his head, wavered, gave his consent. Terii slumped down once again on the mat

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

and wept—this time for joy; Tipuna and she were married.

Since his marriage Tipuna has lived very happily on his reputation. That one fell week during the Fashoda scare taught him what work was, and why it should be avoided. At night when the windows of the Mairie reflect the smoky flicker of the market lamps, when the tables glow under their tender pink burden of sliced melons and the vahines loll over the Chinamen's counters to smoke cigarettes, you may see Tipuna—blue pareo, pink shirt, a red flower stuck behind his ear—sitting on the edge of the oblong slime-choked tank that does duty for fountain, while the army of Papeete virtue crowds to listen.

He still plays the accordion beautifully.

Such is the veracious history of the Fashoda scare, and such the picturesque train of circumstances that saved France's most lotus-gorged colony from the ill-conditioned progressiveness known as Anglo-Saxon civilisation.

## CHAPTER IX

### OFFICIALISM—A STUDY IN RESPONSIBILITIES

“ If all be atoms, how then should the gods,  
Being atomic, not be dissoluble ? ”

ONE of the most touching soft-heartednesses of the French island administration is the way in which it contrives to saddle a man with a salary and a nominal sphere of activity where any other Government would make him work for a living.

It requires five hundred officials to keep Tahiti in harness. What they do with their time is only known to themselves. Provinces of energy, which in England would barely fill the hands of one man, here require an army. There is only one road in Pomaré's island, but it takes a small houseful of clerks to keep its ruts in working order. The average of crime is a burglary once a month, and a midnight assassination every ten years—yet seven judges are required to effectively muddle justice. There is barely capital enough in the entire island to float a liver-pill, yet it takes a quarter of a mile of benches placed end to end (from Pomaré's palace

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

to the quay de Something-or-other) to keep track of financial matters.

And the elaborateness, the complexity of it! The dovetailed, angle-ironed, water-logged, steel-faced, time-locked completeness of the whole thing! A German verb is nothing to it. It is the apotheosis of protocollardom.

Try to get something done in this dear little island, no matter what. Try to bridge a river, to muzzle a dog, to make a false income-tax return. You will tackle it bravely at first, but you will give it up in time. In this paradise dignitaries sprout like mushrooms. You will be referred, and referred, and referred. There will be papers to sign, and papers to sign, and more papers to sign. You will struggle through wildernesses of quill-scratching, past gaping catacombs of pigeon-holes, till your efforts die away in that peopled solitude as the would-be conquerors of the Golden Fleece died before the earth-born warriors of Aietes.

As a general instance of how things are managed in Papeete—what lawyers call a precedent—I will narrate a story told me by Captain Macduff of the Union Company. The details are scrupulously correct in every particular.

It began in the stoke-hole of the *Upolu*, ten feet below the water-line, between the glare of



## Officialism

the furnace-mouths and the glimmer of the bobbing tail-rods. "Long" Allen and "Fighting" Jimmy had served the company faithfully for one calendar month. A prolonged bondage at sea sets an edge on most things, and both men were spoiling for an orgy. Moorea had been sighted from the mast-head at 8 A.M., and when, an hour from sunset, the vessel finished tautening her cables opposite the tin-roofed Customs, both men were reported missing. The vahine-haunted alley-ways of Papeete had engulfed them—lank hair, dirty finger-nails, and all. The voice of discipline knew them no more.

The captain of the *Upolu* was annoyed, for the Company's agent was hustling things on the wharf, and steam was needed for the winches. Mutiny, at such a time, could not be tolerated. Captain Macduff decided on appealing to the Consul.

The dignitary in question, W. H. Milsom, Esq., was a man of the very mildest type. Socially, he was a trifle out of place in Papeete. He was distinctly religious, had developed seventh-day adventist leanings of a pronounced kind, and systematically avoided impact with the more godless amusement-seekers of the island as likely to cheapen or annul that ægis of mysterious vastness which a British Consul in southern seas loves to claim for his own.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

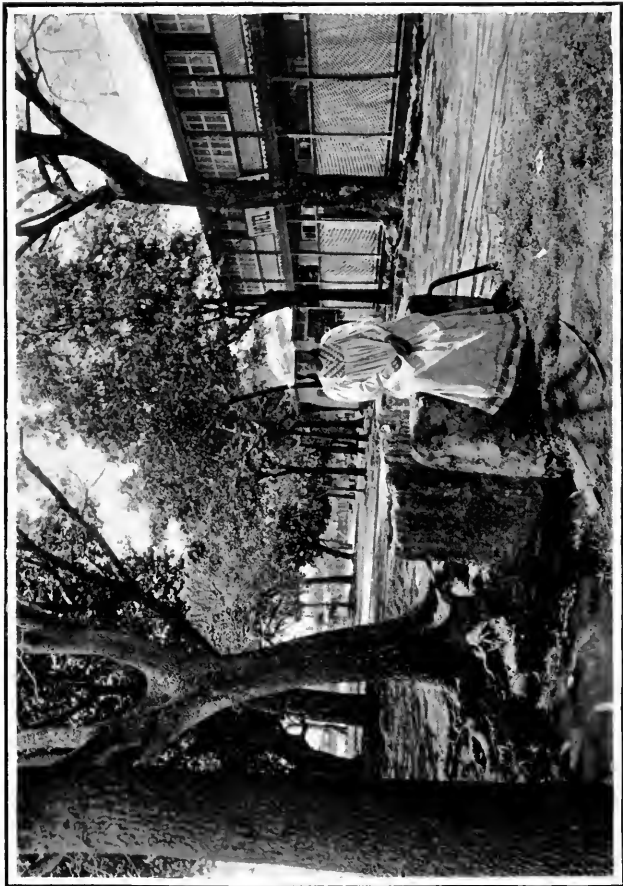
Milsom's views on politics, ethics, art, history, and sociology resolved themselves in Milsom's mind into one dread formula—the dignity of the British Consul *must* be maintained.

Early next morning Captain Macduff called and aired his grievance. The case was not a novel one in Papeete, but to Milsom, bolstered behind barriers of protecting epigram, it presented insuperable difficulties. "I think you had better bring them here to me," he said in his ladylike voice, "and I'll see what I can do."

The men were found, and brought. They were in a state of daze, and preferred the grass plot to any other lounge. Milsom in the interim had been thumbing a book of law. The situation appeared to him a delicate one, and the more he thought over it the more delicate it became.

"Are you going to have these two fellows arrested, or are you not?" queried the captain angrily.

Milsom's universe was splitting into chips and wedges. Had the two stokers only managed to break a lamp-post or maul a vahine, instead of getting decently and systematically drunk at Lambert's, all would have been lovely. As it was, a medley of scattered phrases from the statute-book—consul in foreign ports—subject to consent of authorities—unalienable rights of



*Broom Road, Papete.*



## Officialism

British seamen, &c., swam luridly before his eyes, and he quailed.

“Perhaps if I were to speak to them”—he suggested.

“Stuff!” said the skipper, “might as well speak to a barrack.”

Milsom stepped to the door. An amused audience of Kanakas were grinning through the gateway. Allen shuffled to his feet. Jimmy contented himself with shifting his position on the grass, and eyeing the consul drunkenly.

Milsom began a harangue. He combined the sweetness of a mother chiding her first-born with the persuasiveness of a Wesleyan Methodist in his maiden sermon. We do not give his speech in full. “I wish you to understand, &c., this evasion of your duty, &c., flagrant breach of discipline, &c., much trouble to your employers, &c., &c.”

The demon of square-face here prompted Jimmy to attempt a say.

“What in 'ell are you gassin' away at us for?” he drawled—“gassin' away like a bloomin' old parson? Garn wid ye—old stick-in-the-mud!”

Milsom looked sick. He popped back into his office, and closed the door. “If they don't come back on board within two hours and tackle to, let me know and we'll have them arrested,” he said shortly.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

The skipper departed fuming. Allen and Jimmy ambled down town arm in arm to have one last farewell spree before braving the majesty of the law.

A short distance behind the cathedral, in a Mohammedan paradise of accordions and clothes-lines, lived Allen's "reputed wife" Manou. She received him coldly, for loafing eats up money, and Manou wanted a new dress. "Maama oe" (silly fool), she said as he joined her on the verandah. Jimmy drifted into a rabbit-hutch in the Rue Vigny, and went to sleep. He had no more time to waste on consuls.

Midday struck. Things on the *Upolu* were going from bad to worse. The engines needed doctoring, and the efforts of amateur stokers were making inroad into the bunkers. Milsom's hand was forced. He indited a note to the police-sergeant down the street, and gave it to a Kanaka to deliver.

The then officiating sergeant was a musical Frenchman of twenty-three with a healthy taste for orchestral solo-playing—one of the adornments of Vermege's Saturday Philharmonics. Also, he was conscientious.

"Arrest? *Certainement, monsieur*. One hour, two hour—you are not in a hurry, *saire?*"

"Hurry? Of course I'm in a hurry," said the

## A Study in Responsibilities

bewildered skipper. "I want them taken and brought on board now—at once."

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. "I am sorry, *saire*, my *supérieur* he gone uphill—Fautaua—picnic vat you call."

The skipper wrung his hands, entreated, tried threats. The Frenchman quailed. He had heard of England—and had reason to believe her an implacable foe. But island-law, with its dark web of sinuosities, was too strong for him. Touch one brick of that marvellous structure, and all the others would have to be shifted to prevent a collapse. The skipper turned on his heel, and left the office.

The cathedral clock had chimed eight and the market lamps were well advanced in smokiness before the neat four-horsed drag deposited the *supérieur*, happy and flushed with champagne, in the hands of his subordinate. Then the order was given, but — oh, how warily! how discreetly!

The two sailors were to be found and brought "without violence." The *supérieur* had, like his subordinates, a wholesome regard for England and the majesty of her navy. Were Allen or Jimmy injured in any way, M. Lapeyrouse's neat villa (which was visible from the sea) might be blown to Hades as an opening sacrifice.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

The gendarmes sped on their mission. The day was Saturday, and a sprinkling of the stores were closed in deference to the prejudices of seventh-day adventists. Towards 10 P.M. they reached Manou's hut in the Rue de la Cathédrale, where Allen was allowing his hair to be combed on the front verandah, while Jimmy amused himself with an accordion at the back.

Half-an-hour later they were escorted, meek as lambs in May, down to where the *Upolu* lay puffing in the crescent of sycamores. The skipper was overjoyed. He hastened to congratulate the minions of the law on their success and offer them refreshment in his cabin.

There is many a slip, &c. The gendarmes were bowing and scraping on the afterdeck. There was a hurried chatter of natives on the bank and a shrill yell of laughter as the two men, clambering over the *Upolu's* gunwale, slid like lightning down the bow-chains and vanished among the trees.

The chase began again. While Jimmy scudded chuckling along the Taone road, Allen dodged down a byway into the dwelling-place of his indignant wife, where he took a fresh pull at the rum bottle and entrenched himself behind a second-hand chest of drawers by way of delaying retribution.



## A Study in Responsibilities

The police arrived in due course, heralded by a guffawing army of Papeete loafers. Allen stood at the door and whirled a camp-stool round his head.

“Come on, you d—d Frenchmen,” he howled —“come on, the whole (carmine) lot of you.”

The policemen paled. They had express orders not to use violence. Should a gill of Allen’s sacred blood be spilt, outraged Britain would land in her war-paint and eat Tahiti raw. Allen swung the chair through the air till it hissed and shouted defiance. He was very far gone in liquor.

Then, as the moment drew near which was to usher in a third period of official helplessness, up stalked the only real power in the ballad—Allen’s redoubtable wife Manou. She pulled the chair unceremoniously from the bully’s grasp and took him by the ear.

“Hare—maama,” she said as she pushed him into the arms of the astonished constable.

Jimmy came home next morning in the arms of two Kanakas. He had been found under a hedge in Mangaia-town senseless and incapable of resistance. The *Upolu* was a day late in starting, but Captain Macduff made light of the matter. He was well pleased at having escaped so easily.

And now, comes the moral. It is mightily

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

difficult to point properly. There are too many factors in the equation altogether. For Milsom is afraid of the Foreign Office, Tahiti is afraid of Milsom, the police are afraid of English sailors, and Long Allen is afraid of nothing, unless it be his wife. Furthermore each functionary in the height, depth, and breadth of the Island-Administration is afraid of the next man above him, and the lot of them are afraid of England.

And this is why, when pretty Auckland ladies call at the big brown stone office of the Union Company for news of absent island-cousins, the sleek formula "delayed by stress of weather" should be more rightly worded "salivated by excess of responsibility."

## CHAPTER X

### TOUR OF THE ISLAND—A CHRISTENING— DRIVING PECULIAR

“A populous solitude of bees and birds,  
And fairy-formed and many-coloured things ;  
Nothing to mar the sober majesties  
Of settled, sweet, epicurean life.”

TAHITI measures some 150 miles in circumference. About one-third of this, between Papeete and the commencement of the Tairapu Peninsula, is decent roadstead ; the rest is virgin jungle. Tahitian driving, be it said, is of the most reckless kind, Jehu-ism of the deepest dye. Also the great thing in the eyes of Papeete youth in going round the island is to break the record. Break the record and come back alive, if possible, but break it anyhow.

There are two so-called livery-stables in Papeete, with a varied collection of uncouth vehicles for hire that would do honour to a Mayfair surgical museum. We visited the first of these establishments, one kept by a noble Frenchman whose ancestor was beheaded in the Revolution. A lanky Kanaka—a variant on the

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

obelisque of Luxor—was sleeping on a bed of straw. We stirred him up. He smiled faintly, blinked at the sun, blew his nose in workman fashion, adjusted his pareo, walked leisurely up to the nearest tree, plucked a flower for an ear-piece, looked us over, yawned, smiled again, and announced himself ready to help.

De Smidt, my co-mate in the enterprise, and a regular patron of the noble Frenchman, explained. The Kanaka kindly feigned understanding. He ambled towards the shed, and, his red drapery flapping prettily round his heels, drew out a thing that looked like a disused Black Maria. It was boxed up like a hencoop, and painted in funereal green, with a solitary square window in the back. I tapped one of the springs. It was undoubtedly cracked; in fact, both were. The right pole was intact, the left had been mended with string. We backed the Kanaka up against the wall of the hay-loft and put him to the question. He admitted the waggon had been used on Government service once, but had been shelved on account of the scarcity of criminals. I felt my visit to the island to be distinctly an event in history, but judged it unnecessary to advertise on such an alarming scale. We passed.

The Kanaka drew out another conveyance.

## Tour of the Island

It had once been a noble ship's locker, but some barbarian had added wheels and spoiled it. It was innocent of springs, seats, or cover. We couldn't hope to cram ourselves in, luggage and all, and even had we been able to, we should have got sunstroke and perished miserably. Nothing was left but to pass again.

The Kanaka then exhibited a C-spring buggy with one wheel off, two perambulators, a milk-van with divisions for bottles, and a hay-waggon with the front knocked out. I began to look sick. De Smidt was serenity itself. The Kanaka banged and shuffled about, and presently dragged out his masterpiece—a sticky-looking char-a-banc with three lovely seats, a roof, and two solid poles. A few of the wheel-spokes were snapped here and there, but they were neatly mended with bits of old biscuit-tin and copper nails; a creditable vehicle on the whole—very creditable indeed.

De Smidt said, "You jump in and drive out to my house while I go and order provisions." I said I knew little of Papeete streets, and still less of Papeete horses. "That's all right—whack 'em and pray," was the answer.

The plugs were produced and harnessed. One, "Quinze Piastres"—named after the price paid for him (about 30s.)—was a drowsy beast

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

with triangular suggestions of starvation about his hocks and withers. The other, "Prince," probably called after Hinoe, looked as though the springiness which ought to have been underneath the waggon floor had crept along the shafts and lodged in his legs. He was a lively reprobate of a horse, and, as we found out later, a bit of a humorist.

Allez! The start was a glorious one. I rattled along at a cheerful fifteen-mile gait through a double cordon of women and scurrying infants. An aged Chinaman bearing two heavy tins of food crossed my path. The pole struck him in the middle of the back and sent him and his dinner rolling in the mud. It was a royal disaster, and executed with the precision of a Wilson-Barrett murder-scene. I consoled the weeping Chow with a dollar and fled, for through the vista of roof-thatches I caught the gleam of distant epaulettes, and knew a gendarme was coming up to inquire.

We spent the night at Taone and rose at 3 A.M. Quinze Piastres and Prince had passed the night tethered in the scrub, and had eaten everything within reach. They were in fine healthy condition. The morning was one of misty light and shade. On the one side the sea, and the salt smell of the reef; on the other, the

## Tour of the Island

lightening fringe of mountains and the aromatic breath of the jungle. At a Chinaman's, a mile along the road, the gleam of kettles through the window attracted us. Half-a-score of Kanakas in shirts and pareos were imbibing coffee at wooden benches. What would life in South Seas be without Chinamen? And they tell me the Government are girding up their loins to expel them. Egad—'tis a wicked, wicked sin!

The long thin arm of Point Venus passed like a flash, and at the foot of the red-clay hill the jungle swallowed us *pour le bon*. The road disappeared, leaving two picturesque yellow ruts enclosing a long strip of velvety green. Sometimes the gloom of the wood envelops you, sometimes the curtain of leaves parts to allow a free view of the landscape—that smiling careless Tahitian landscape where the weeds laugh at the idea of road boundaries; where the sea, disdaining regular shore-line, straggles prettily among its hundred islets; where the mountains flout all known laws of natural architecture, the wind disdains regular blasts; the sun, as careless as the rest, shining above the palms clear as frosted silver, anon permitting—

“The basest clouds to ride  
With ugly rack on his celestial face”—

it is a kingdom of *laissez-faire*.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Island driving, in the present state of the roads, is a breakneck performance. If one could manage to keep in the ruts it might be all right. The cart would slide along like a train on rails. But this is impossible. The banana roots straggle over the ground in such fashion as to throw the boasted Virginia corduroy roads into the shade. Also the work has to be done in semi-darkness, a dim cloistered twilight being all one has to work by. This makes it thrilling. Tahitian driving is not a good thing to bet on—no matter how good a driver one is. The road is never alike for two weeks at a time. Just as you get to what you fondly remember as a soft level stretch, a murderous banana root pushes its nose out and you fetch up with a hiccup that loosens every tooth in your head, and snaps everything within reach.

Tahiti is one of the wettest places of its size extant. In its circumference of 150 miles, at least, a hundred odd streams, some half-dozen of them respectable-sized rivers, carry their burden of flower-dust seaward. Needless to say, once clear of Papeete postal radius there is no trace of a bridge anywhere. There are various ways of getting across. The best plan, in the case of the smaller ones, is to give a piercing yell, loose the reins, and make the horses take them at a rush.





*Faaa Point, Tahiti.*



## Tour of the Island

If all goes well there is a splash, a halo of flying water, and you dive back into the foliage at the other side like into a railway-tunnel. If all doesn't, you either miss the path and crash into a tree, or else get bodily overturned. Then it takes half a day to get her back on the track, and another half to repair the damage.

Hiteaea, a village situated half-way between Papeete and Teravao, is a Paradise in miniature. One-half of the settlement is smothered in giant bamboos, the remainder dotted among the palms at the water's edge. The houses are in true Tahitian style—oval tents of bamboo with thatches of woven pandanus and hanging curtains of "tappa." There is a broad lawn with copses of *stephanotis* and *tiaré*, a warm wide loop of coral, a flashing necklace of reef, and the blue hills of Taiarapu thinning in the noonday haze—such is Hiteaea.

In the interim of awaiting a scratch meal at the Chinaman's, we get a bath in the river. Tahitian streams come from a great height, and, flowing through deep, shady cañons, the sun has little chance to strike them. As a result the pools are cold as ice, and sudden immersion gives one a shock. There are no crocodiles, no salamanders, no vipers, no water-snakes. Nothing but clusters of floating blossoms and buzzing wasps. The latter are the only nuisance. They can be over-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

come by diving. For the rest the borders are set with thick carpets of blue hyacinths, vigorous and prolific enough to positively dam the river in places and cause overflows.

A goodly party was assembled at the chief's house (an offensively modern shanty of wood by the way); knots of girls were parading the lawn, matrons crowned with flowers presiding—'twas a christening! The proud mother, arrayed in a sort of balloon of crushed yellow silk, did us the honour to shake hands. The baby was invisible. Presently out she came—a tiny wee brown dot, like a piece of chocolate confectionery. And the name? Oh yes, the name! Mary Martha Elisabeth Isabella Cleopatra Terii Mapue—or words to that effect. She fingered De Smidt's watch-chain and said goo-goo in English, but burst into tears at the sight of the camera, and had to be taken back to bed.

We were thirsty, and the papaw trees were thick with fruit. After some ineffective attempts at dislodging the nuts with stones the old chiefess got a pole and mended matters. Some one then thoughtfully suggested a hoola. Three of the young ladies got out their instruments—guitars, if you please, not concertinas—and sludged down amicably on mats. Three more took up their position in front of the players and com-

## A Christening

menced to wriggle in *danse du ventre* fashion. The performance was hardly graceful and did not look difficult. I suggested, in fun, that the old chiefess should teach *me*. To my unutterable surprise and confusion, she consented. I was compelled to stand by my offer. Half the village looked on and laughed while the old lady, a broad grin on her good-natured face, tried to teach me the steps, and De Smidt—lest the priceless record be lost to the world—officiated behind the camera.

We left Hiteaea late in the afternoon. As De Smidt gave the preliminary flourish of the whip, three beauties, one of whom had officiated in the hoola, edged forward and clamoured to be taken. They had come all the way from Teravao and wanted to ride home. They would be good—oh, *so* good—“mitinaries” every one of them. “Very well, jump in,” I said. “Where are they going to sit?” for the place was stuffed with baggage like a gipsy caravan. The girls climbed in. The eldest commenced by sitting on my camera case. As soon as she was rebuked and settled, a fourth girl appeared, chewing liquorice, and clamoured for admittance.

De Smidt said, “Hang it all—it’s not fair on the horses.” But the girl had her way, and was allowed to clamber in. Four Kanaka boys then

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

ran after us and howled to be taken. De Smidt cut at them with the whip, but presently, at my entreaty, relented and permitted two of them to hang on behind.

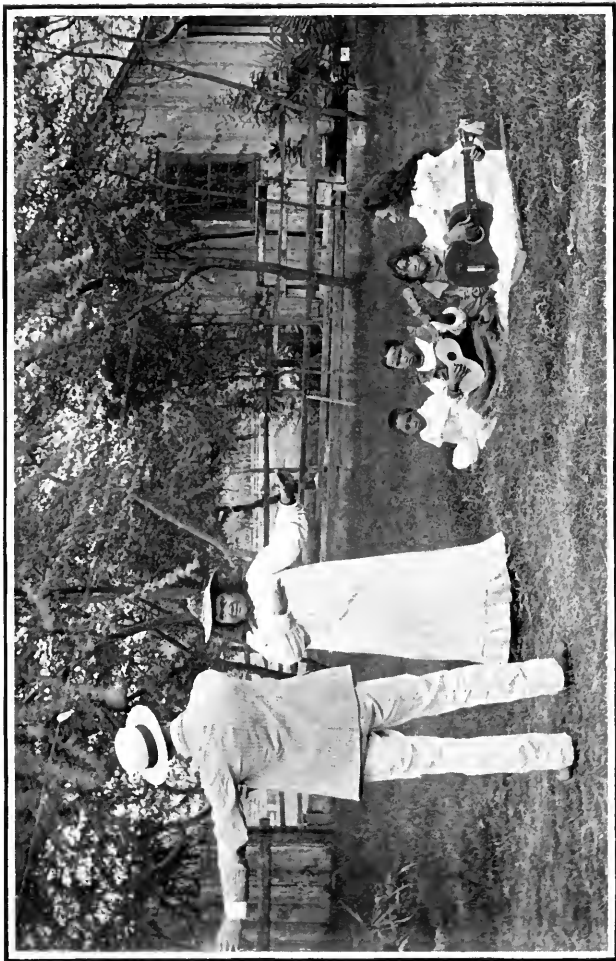
We moved off amid cheers. De Smidt said "If this gets round Papeete the Government'll tax me for starting a private lunatic asylum."

The jungle closed in. The girls and their cavaliers had imbibed freely before starting, and evinced a disposition to sing. It was an awful ride. The road was the worst we had struck yet. The twigs and creepers slapped and scratched our faces till we looked like Brigham Young after a family jar. And the more we swore and suffered, the more that giddy sextet of Kanakas howled and sang.

The bushes thinned. A broad river confronted us, rushing through a bed of scrub from a deep purple cleft in the mountains. How to get across? The stream was too wide to be "rushed," and indications of a ford there were none.

"Let's make 'em get out and swim," I suggested. De Smidt cracked the whip valiantly. "I'm not going to allow myself to be beaten by such a trifle," he said—"we'll show these darlings what a European can do. Hold tight!"

A soft black sandspit led out into midstream.



*A Lesson in Dancing.*





## Driving Peculiar

As the wheels sank in the ooze the girls stopped their song. We entered the water, and as we did so we felt the char-a-banc tipping from right to left. The water came higher, gurgling prettily round the spokes. The horses whinnied, and two of the girls began to chatter nervously. The cart tilted till its contents showed a tendency to topple. The girls screamed. One yard more, only one yard—then something slid away beneath our left wheel and over we went into the water!

When I rose three girls were standing immersed to their waist, shrieking and wiping mud out of their eyes. The char-a-banc had righted herself, the packages were floating tranquilly about. De Smidt, hatless, water running down his face, waded to the nearest sandbank and laughed. We cursed each other freely.

“This comes from trying to show off. You know as much about driving as a cat about conic sections.”

“My driving’s all right! It’s your chock-headed imbecility in wanting to take these savages. If they hear of this in Papeete my reputation’s ruined.”

“Anyway, you got us into the mess, and you’ve got to get us out of it—look slippy, there’s one girl beginning to cry.”

We waded about collecting our property and

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

piled it into the cart. Then we took the horses by the head and, up to our shoulders in water, piloted them across the stream. The girls found a ford higher up the river and joined us presently, but not all the gold of Arabia could tempt them to take a seat in the cart again. They had seen enough of European driving, and, willy-nilly, we had to travel on to Teravao alone.

## CHAPTER XI

### TOUR OF THE ISLAND (*continued*)—INDUSTRIES

“Drones suck not eagles’ blood, but rob bee-hives.”

TERAVAO—a straggling settlement of Kanaka huts and iron-roofed planter-villas—lies on the side of the island diametrically opposite Papeete, at the commencement of the Tairapu Isthmus. We put up at the usual Chinaman’s, and foolishly allowed ourselves to be persuaded into playing poker with him. The wily Chow chiselled us out of twenty dollars, and, seeing that the gambling debt was punctually paid (a rare circumstance in Tahiti), proceeded to villainously overcharge us on the plea that we were millionaires. “For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain,” &c.

The road leading round the south side of the island to Papeete crosses a series of lovely palm-fringed bays, warm, sheltered and fragrant as a Kentish conservatory. For miles across the undulating hills the forest of scrub rolls on—not as thick jungle or tangled brake—but in fold after fold of luminous thin-foliaged trees dense enough to grant a sort of half-shade, and sparse enough to

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

let the breeze through. Most of this is what is called vanilla country, the vanilla-bean having become, thanks to its easy mode of cultivation, a lucrative field for native energy.

In fact, the Kanaka, try hard though he may, cannot very well remain completely idle. It has never yet been definitely ascertained what will *not* grow in Tahiti. Tobacco, coffee, cotton, vanilla, hemp, sugar, rice, indigo, opium, copra, pepper, cinnamon—all the tropical fruits and two-thirds of the temperate vegetables flourish with an ease that has something of the supernatural about it.

I once consulted an authority on the subject—an American, a Mr. Kennedy—owner of the largest and most prosperous sugar plantation the island possesses. It was impossible to mention a substance that Kennedy could not theoretically produce from the raw material of the soil. Soap, sugar, hair-oil, silk, champagne, railway grease, rice pudding, lightning rods, antibilious pills—anything, from a wife to a weather prophet. I am not sure whether these last two items were warranted to give satisfaction, but I don't mind taking shares in the others if somebody will help.

Let us examine things in detail. Fifty or sixty years ago cotton used to be the mainstay of



*"Where mountain spirits prate to river sprites."*



## Industries

Tahiti, Raiatea, and the Marquesas group. It has now been dropped altogether. The plants were rapidly becoming hybridised, and the quality of the yield has deteriorated. This might have been combated by the introduction of fresh seed and the partial destruction of existing plants. The American Civil War, however, brought the price of cotton so low that it was hardly thought advisable to risk the expense. Cotton is now a thing of the past.

Vanilla—thanks to the increased demand for the article during the last seven years—has now taken its place, and indeed has become, together with copra (the dried kernel of the coco-nut), the principal resource of the Tahitian peasantry. The work involved is of the simplest. The vanilla-bean, being an orchid proper, requires both damp and shade, and a partial clearing of the land only is necessary. Within from eighteen months to two years of planting it commences to bear, and continues to do so during a period of from ten to fifteen years without replanting. A few days' labour in each year devoted to pulling down shoots that climb too high, or replacing broken supports, are all that is needed.

A strange feature of the culture is that, owing to the entire absence in these islands of humming-birds, moths, or lizards, which in other countries

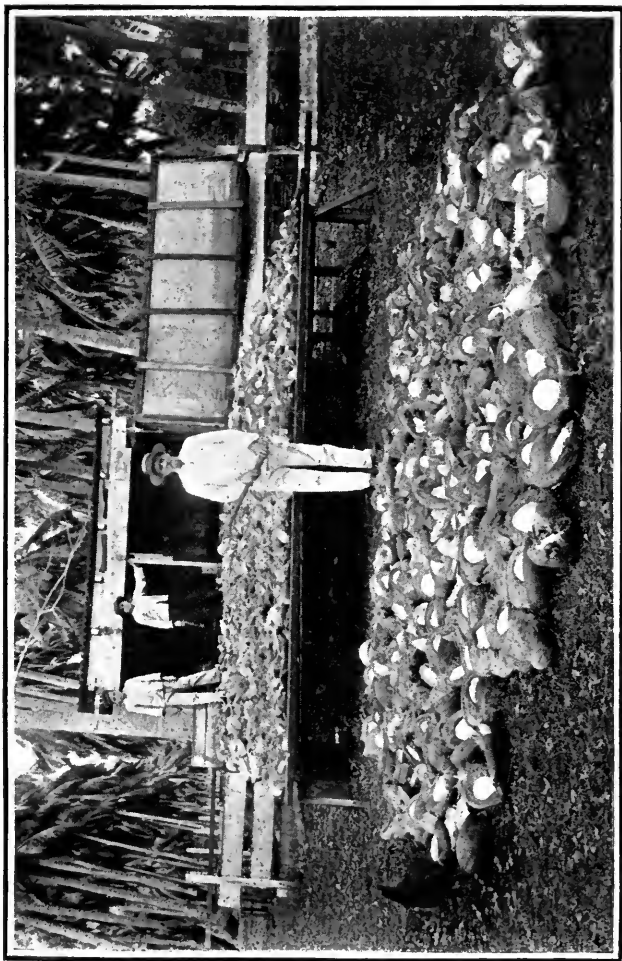
## The Log of an Island Wanderer

serve to fertilise the flowers, each blossom (which is hermaphrodite) must be artificially fertilised by hand, by transferring the pollen from one portion of the flower to the other. This is, however, no great task, one person unaided being able to fertilise a thousand or more flowers a day. The bean hangs for six months or so on the tree, at the end of which time it is plucked, dried in the sun, and packed in tinfoil for shipment.

Copra—the shrivelled inside of the coco-nut—is perhaps the most popularly accepted industry of the South Seas. There is hardly an island in the Pacific which does not harbour the coco-palm. The tree itself is the most hardy known to natural science. It needs neither earth, mould, sand, nor manure, and will sprout on bare rock if nothing better offers. The result is that the process of copra-making essentially belongs to the smaller, more insignificant islands of the group, for in the larger islands whatever labour is available can be more profitably expended on vanilla culture.

A copra plantation is simply a palm forest on an ordered scale. The amount of land actually available in each island for coco-planting is relatively small. The coco-palm is indifferent as to soil, but it requires sea air and a certain percentage of salt, also a fairly level stretch of





*Drying Copra, Tahiti.*



## Industries

ground and the ozone of the trade-wind, to flourish properly. The long stretch of alluvial soil, strewn with boulders of coral, lying between the base of the mountains and the sea is in all the islands eminently the site elected by and for the coco-palm. The labour of clearing brush-wood for a new plantation is not a difficult undertaking. The nuts are planted methodically in rows—about thirty feet apart being the preferred distance to ensure maximum bearing-power. With the first appearance of the feathery tuft of green at the top of each nut the work of the planter begins. Domestic animals and robber crabs are not the only nuisances. The tender shoots are looked on as a tit-bit by the Kanakas, and a single night's depredation in quest of "coco-nut salad" may mean several thousand pounds gone to Jericho. Unceasing vigilance and a shot-gun are the most approved remedies. At the end of the first year your tree is able to take care of itself. It is slowly developing into a stately palm. Your labour in the immediate present is done; there only remains for you to sit down and wait. From eight to ten years are required to bring the trees to maturity. The yield naturally varies. From seventy to eighty nuts per tree is looked on as a good annual average, though cases of a hundred are frequent,

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

and with care, it seems even a higher record might be attained.

The process of converting the ripened nut into copra is puerile in its simplicity. Every step too is characteristic of the *far niente* island-life. No need to bother picking up the nuts. They are allowed to drop on the sward of themselves, two boys being daily sent round with a handcart to pick up what has fallen during the night. The fruit is then split open with an axe or *machete* and left lying in the sun, its white inside exposed to the glare. When the kernel has finally shrivelled to the consistency of shoe-leather it is detached, shovelled into a bag and packed for shipment. The profits are certain, the demand regular, the scheduled market value subject to no kind of fluctuation whatever. Copra-planting is the champion lazy-man trade.

And pray what is copra used for? Well, principally for making railway-grease — though its other less legitimate uses are legion. Copra is a most convenient substance, and lends itself to endless adulterations. It is the sheet-anchor of the oil-merchant. Once get rid of its villainous smell and you can turn it into any kind of oil you choose. Hair-oil, machine-oil, cod-liver oil, salad-oil—a bushel of labels and an elastic conscience are all that is required. Both articles

## Industries

can be procured within two thousand miles of Tahiti.

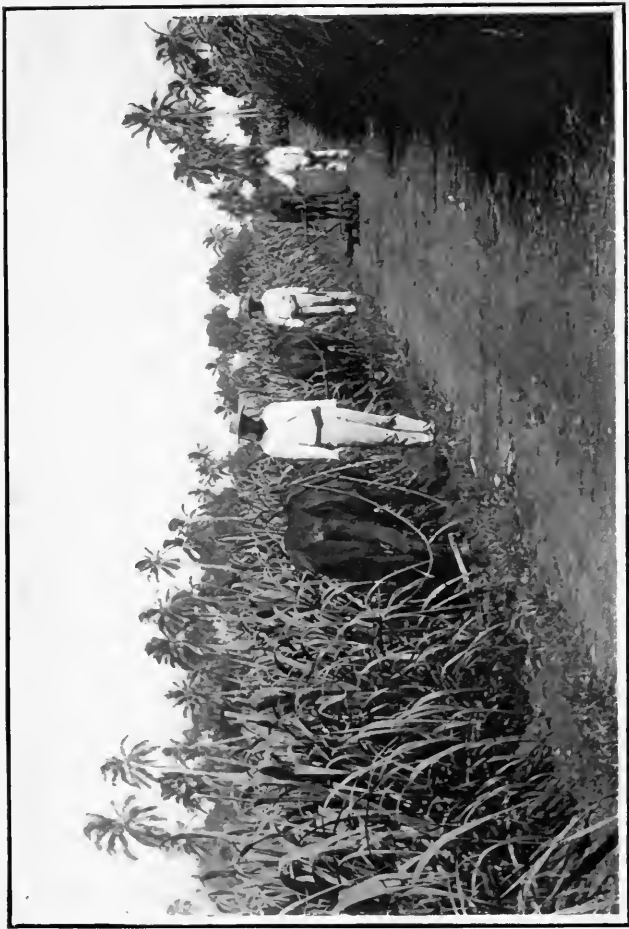
This chapter is becoming horribly technical. Sugar, as a staple export of the South Seas, is as yet comparatively a dead letter, partly owing to the natural laziness of the natives, partly to the contradictory vacillations of the Government. Land for sugar requires clearing, real systematic clearing, not the desultory amateur axemanship that suffices for vanilla. Sugar also needs ploughing, triennial planting and weeding. It is too much like hard work. Yet the productive powers of the soil when finally under way border on the sublime. Those genial Americans, Kennedy and Fritch, have hardly a mile under cultivation, yet the output of their baby sugar-refinery suffices for the local consumption of the main island and some twenty other islands in the Cook, Paumotu, and Marquesas groups. Their establishment is well worth a visit, if only to see what the dogged Anglo-Saxon can do when he is allowed to tackle to "on his own."

The mill, which is worked by steam, is situated on the north side of Papeete on the edge of a waving cane-field midway between Mangaia-town and the historic Fautaua avenue. The building is divided into a basement and two storeys, the former containing the boilers and engines, the

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

latter the refineries and residue-pans. A ponderous structure of iron, twenty tons or more in weight, occupies the centre of the hall. Engineers are scarce in these latitudes. I am not surprised when my host informs me with some pride that he was compelled to superintend the setting up of the machinery himself.

The place is a whirl of life and buzz. A tiny toy railway brings in the trucks loaded with odorous green stalks. In the dark under the shed the great rollers are clanking sullenly. The cane is thrown into the shoots and you catch the complaining screech of the torn fibres as the cane squirts its treasures into the reservoir. A pump raises the liquid to the second storey, where it is allowed to trickle through a series of vats arranged stepwise in paddy-field fashion. Here your attention is turned to the ponderous iron structure before mentioned. A Kanaka in blue ducks, but minus the ear-flower (no fripperies allowed here) opens a tap. A horrible sticky substance, molasses, sand, and bilge-water, oozes out. It is not nice to look at. But put a bucketful in the centrifugals and watch the result. With the expulsion of the moisture the stuff changes colour. It becomes pale chocolate, maroon, coffee, café au lait, mulatto, Spaniard, Eurasian, consumptive American, Grecian nymph. Kennedy stops the



*Wedding Sugar-cane.*





## Industries

machine, bends, takes out a handful of pure white table-sugar and offers it you with a "How do you like that, my buck?" twinkling from the corner of his eye.

Indeed, the more the intricacies of the process are explained, the more the wonders of this unseen mill in the desert confound and delight you. The Kanaka workmen are as marvellous as the rest. A Kanaka paddling a war-canoe, a Kanaka among roses, a Kanaka carving a missionary—these are pictures that have grown with us from childhood. But a Kanaka civilised, a Kanaka industrious, a Kanaka minding a steam-engine, these are things to be considered with bated breath. The sun of their philosophy has not yet risen.

With all the acres of land devoted to coco-nut, sugar, and vanilla, the existing trade of the Societies is, as in the case of Rarotonga, a mere pin-prick to what might be done under another administration. The French island-policy is of course at the bottom of the mischief. Here are a few of the minor aches, briefly considered :

There is no land-tax. Nine-tenths of the arable land belongs to the natives, who, as they have no rent to pay, naturally refuse to till it. Kanaka families want but little here below. A weekly supply of faies (plantains) from the bush

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

will keep the best of them in opulence. Why should the Kanaka sell his land? It costs him nothing to live on, and it gives him facilities for lying on his back and studying the habits of clouds which he could never hope to enjoy elsewhere. So he stays on his land and loafs and growls, and the French officials loaf and growl, and the English settler follows suit, and loafs and growls too, and everybody is busy and nothing is done.

I doubt if (with the exception of Kennedy's cane-fields) its maximum yield be drawn from a single square mile of Tahitian soil. Even the coco-plantations hardly pay the way they ought to. A coco-tree is not a jealous vegetable. Most kinds of fruit, particularly the pine-apple, can be grown to advantage in its shade. What is to prevent an enterprising Yankee or Briton setting up a canning factory on a large scale and supplying the Australian or American market? De Smidt and I once began a calculation of the probable profits derivable from a combined copra and pine-apple plantation. We paid off the national debt in half-an-hour. Then, as we were preparing to finance the Nicaragua Canal, the French Government stepped in, cracked on a rattling impost, and spoiled our game. It is a little way they have.



*Kanaka carrying Fates (plantains).*



## Industries

As it is with the harvest of the land, so is it with that of the sea. The waters literally swarm with fish, from the stately *patui* which could swallow Sandow at a gulp, to the microscopic sapphire-blue minnow whom nature seems to have designed to grace a lady's bonnet-pin, so pretty and wee is he. Papeete market ought to be a perfect museum. Alas! A few pitiful strings of scarlet bonitos (flying-fish), and an occasional baby shark, are all you can find, and unless you or your cook are particularly early risers, you run the risk of being obliged to do without either.

Verily, verily, such arrogance of inaction precedes a fall. Despite the retrograde efforts of the French, the dollar is moving onwards, steadily, remorselessly, as the car of Juggernaut. And the time is not far off, nay, it is even now at hand, when, under the ægis of a newer and more materialistic administration, the cable-car shall buzz, the telephone squeak, and the book-agent lie in the leafy avenues of Papeete.

Till then, brother Kanaka, enjoy your paradise.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE OCEAN OF MARAMA

“I could say more, but do not choose to encroach  
Upon the privileges of the guide-book.”

TAHITI is the largest of five islands—stars in Pomaré’s lost crown—of which the other four bear the names of Moorea, Huahine, Raiatea, and Bora-Bora respectively. The geographical grouping of the lot is very simple. The five islands follow each other from east to west, beginning at Moorea, twelve miles from Tahiti; Huahine, sixty miles farther on; Raiatea with its sister-island Tahaa; and Bora-Bora, the last and most westerly of the group. If you are particular you may add to these the little *motus* (island-dots) of Tubai, Bellingshausen, Maupiti, Mapetia, and Scilly. These latter are negligible, however. It is true that the tern and the tropic bird (the big black one with the scarlet feathers in his tail) find them admirable for roosting purposes, but as they will roost on floating hencoops, old barrels, &c., their testimony is valueless. It

## The Ocean of Marama

is with the five larger islands we are mainly concerned.

Were the French entrusted with the sole navigation of the Archipelago I fear the islands would remain unvisited for the greater part of the time: even to-day there is but one vessel, the humble *Southern Cross*, and she belongs to hated England. Nay, even of late years there have been serious cabals got up in Papeete for the purpose of suppressing her. What right have Englishmen to intrude on waters sacred to the tricolor? The question has been argued over and over again in the Tahiti parliament with all the viciousness of island tape-pulling. But no French boat is forthcoming, and as M. Goupil, one of the oldest and wisest of the residents, says, "We prefer an English boat to no boat at all."

The *Croix du Sud* starts at two, and the grassy lawn, which the name wharf obviously libels, is a blaze of colour. The vahines are assembled in full force under the trees. The starting of a ship is the signal for the darlings to put on their best dresses. Orofena has donned her nightcap of cloud—she is a sleepy mountain at all times—and the tiny American flag floating over the Consulate cuts the blue precipice neatly in half. It is 2.30 P.M. Gazing at the cathedral clock, just

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

visible above its grove of flamboyants, by way of setting my watch, I notice that the hands point to 11.15. M. Goupil is on deck and I ask him the reason.

“Ah,” he replies grimly, “that clock is a representative clock, and (with a sigh) it is wound by a representative man!”

A clanging of engine-bells. Kedge hauled in. We are off.

Moorea—to a traveller with that most dire of all gifts, the bump of poesy—is in a sense the artistic complement of Tahiti. If God made Tahiti, the devil made Moorea. And he made it well. Such grim fortresses, such a frowning desolation of stone has surely never been seen or heard of outside the nightmares of Dante or Edgar Allan Poe.

At all times of the day the spectacle is an impressive one, and this whether seen through the blue haze of distance or from the nearness of its own breaker-fringed shore. Its tall needles are the first to greet the light of day, hanging above the shadows of the nether world like luminous cones set in space. Then the light shifts, and as the sun creeps up to noon the ruggednesses don their midday dress of green. The island knows you are watching it. It tries to smile. But it



## The Ocean of Marama

is the smile of a sycophant. No light that ever played on sea or land can bring kindness to those cruel lances of stone, to those unhealthy féfé<sup>1</sup>-haunted valleys. The afternoon wears on, and as the sun goes to his grave in the cold scent of the furze, you see Moorea once more in her true character—as a world of titans and monsters. Great fan-shaped sheaves of light stab the zenith from behind the dark monstrosities. The peaks appear cut out in silhouettes against the fierce fires. The bastions shaped themselves into heads, and the timeless things of the wilderness wake as beneath the touch of a fiend. Small wonder that Tahitian mythology placed the abode of departed souls on the highest summit, the peak of Rootia. Then, even as you look, the grim glow wavers, flickers, dies, and gaunt Moorea sinks into the shadows of the night, monstrous even in death.

The *Croix du Sud* was not a sumptuously fitted boat, but quite good enough for the service required of her. Among the passengers we counted an American doctor, commissioned to investigate the mysteries of elephantiasis, three missionaries and their wives, a French official of vague and indeterminable importance, a dozen Papara pigs and as many Taiohae mules, the period of whose durance had not yet begun.

<sup>1</sup> Elephantiasis.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

We reached the Moorea landing-place after a couple of hours' tossing. Several officials armed with ponderous bags of Chile dollars chose to land here. On being asked what their particular line of business was I was told "electioneering." The rain came down presently, and the tall needles of Papetoai Bay were blotted out behind a ground-glass curtain of mist. The evening was cold and windy.

On the forward deck a score of natives attired in all colours of the rainbow were entrenched behind odorous heaps of pine-apple. It was my fate to share one of the larger cabins with the French official, who turned out to be none other than the governor of Raiatea in person. As I crept into my bunk, luckily a top one, the natives, whose Mark Tapleyism dictated happiness under all circumstances, set up a *himené* to pass the time. I thought the music pretty. One of the women would begin by pitching on a high note, then working her way down into the medium register, when the chorus joined in, and the original tune was lost sight of in a maze of ebbing, pulsating harmony. I thought I recognised one of the Tahitian national love-songs—

"Terii tié tepaa ehau."

My visits to the Papeete market had made me familiar with the refrain, but the novelty of the

## The Ocean of Marama

situation lent it a new charm. The general tone of the music was plaintive—almost painfully so—and the exotic, semi-Chinese colouring of the harmony took away nothing from its pathos. Indeed it seemed to add to it. The wind, too, and the sleepy wash of the sea played their part in the general effect. I felt strangely stirred, and hoped the song would continue indefinitely. Not so the great man beneath me.

“Cré nom d’un chien ! Jamais j’ai vu un bateau ou l’on menait un chahut pareil.”

I feigned sympathy. The light from the saloon was wobbling unpleasantly over the white ceiling. We were fairly out into the current that runs between Moorea and Huahine, the legendary sea of Marama (the moon), where native tradition cradled the ark of Toa (Noah?). I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

Huahine came in due course the following morning. A long line of undulating hills shutting out the yellow sunrise, palm-splotches, a smell of guava-scrub, and a deep-green line of water where the coral grows hard enough and spikily enough to do for the keels of a million ironclads. It was very early, and the strings of girls sitting along the tiny pier, like rows of parrots, rubbed their eyes languidly, as becomes ladies of fashion startled from their slumbers.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Huahine, as usual, has its little nucleus of intrigue. It is still squabbling over the claims of two rival queens, and inasmuch as facilities for marriage in this charming country are truly Edenic, why—you cannot very well throw a brick in any given direction without hitting a princess, or a girl related to one.

The island also has its picturesque and historical sides. The roads are even more densely wooded than those of Tahiti, and the coast-line is a medley of little blue bays overhung with snaky palms and fringed with scarlet and yellow lines of hibiscus and gardenia bushes (tiaré Tahiti).

At the south end of Huahine rises a singular structure of stone, a *marae* (temple) sacred to Hiro—the redoubtable Hi-Yu-Muckamuck of Leeward doxology. Artistically speaking, the marae is not much to look at—a badly cemented platform of limestone blocks half-hidden in ti-tree scrub. Historically it is very interesting. Hiro was a curious kind of god. Morally, he was a sort of cross between the Scandinavian Loki and the Indian Hanuman. His speciality was highway robbery and the subtler varieties of brigandage. He was no snob, however, and when the supply of brigands failed even the humble house-breaker found favour in his sight. When Captain



*Landing-place, Huahine.*



## The Ocean of Marama

Cook landed here in 1760 he made practical acquaintance with Hiro's sphere of activity under circumstances which deserve detailed narration.

The natives at that time were leading a cheerful open-air Kneipp-cure existence in houses of woven pandanus, and Cook—with that overdone charity that characterises the old-time explorer in his dealings with savages who merely want to be left alone—determined to initiate them into the mysteries of European carpentry, free, gratis, and for nothing. A house was designed for the chief on approved English sanitary principles, and the ship's carpenter was sent on shore to execute it. Among the crowd of onlookers there chanced to be a priest of Hiro, a pious, simple-minded rascal, and presently, while the worthy carpenter's back was turned, his saw vanished.

The carpenter said a bad word—and went on with his work. Presently the adze followed the saw—a keg of nails followed the adze, and the despoiled knight of labour returned to his ship to mourn the loss of his tools and cuff his subordinates.

Cook complained—in vain. The tools had disappeared for good and all. The house of the chief had to be left unfinished.

A few weeks later Cook departed. Great were the rejoicings in Huahine. From the secret re-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

cesses of the marae the stolen implements were brought to life and examined. A solemn conclave was held. The powers of these magical weapons must not be lost. They must be preserved, duplicated if possible for the island's benefit. A field was selected and blessed. The tools were wrapped in odorous leaves and solemnly planted. It was expected that a crop of saws and adzes would result. Hiro's blessing was invoked. The island sat down to wait.

For three months floods of happy tears washed the steps of the marae. Hiro's altar was smothered in flowers, his high priest extolled to the skies. People waited—at first meekly, then cynically, and at last angrily. The harvest had miscarried. Women began to regret having slobbered over Hiro's marae. Some went as far as hinting that the god was an impostor, and suggesting the cutting down of the high priest's salary. The reigning queen caught the blasphemers, and had their ears cut off. In vain—disbelievers were springing up on every side. The queen, after a decent period of obstinacy, ended by going over to the majority.

Hiro was dishonoured, his temple given over to the creatures of the wilderness, his high priest compelled to shovel coal for a living.

This was why, when, a year or so later, the



## The Ocean of Marama

body of missionaries came with Bible and rum-barrel to save these erring children of nature, they found to their surprise that circumstances had paved the way for their sophisms. Huahine had lost faith in its old gods, and was ready to try a new one.

Thus—ushered in through the mediumship of an humble burglary—was Christianity, with its mystic symbolisms, its consolations and glorious promises, first introduced and consolidated among the races of the Eastern Pacific.

Raiatea, the next island to Huahine, and the third on the list, is visible at a distance of thirty miles as a long low shadow hemming the western sea-rim. It is, taking it all round, by far the most important island of the group—as well from a social as from a commercial standpoint.

As usual in these seas it is girdled by a vast coral-reef, and this reef also includes the twin island of Tahaa, separated from Raiatea by a six-mile channel. Navigation is very dangerous, as the reefs cross and recross in mazy confusion, and the French charts are said to—need polish.

The landing is not nearly so pretty as at Huahine. A great corrugated-iron shed disfigures it, flanked by unsightly whitewashed railings and piles of packing-cases. The next

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thing you sight is a silver-braided French policeman, who looms up as we have seen a beggar loom up on reaching Italy, a cabman with a crushed top-hat in Ireland, or a brass spittoon in New York. It is the little touch of local colour—there is no fault to find.

A genial lot these Raiateans! We are greeted by a hail of *ioranas*. And what is the latest Papeete scandal, pray? Has Miss Thing-umbob got tired of her What's-his-name yet? Bless us—these pensive-eyed, thoughtful young ladies who eye us so abstractedly from the shade of the buraos are quite as fond of having two strings to their bow as anything on the sunny side of Belgrave Square.

Also they are expecting a distinguished visitor. As I walk along the flat, sunny road, with its gardens of hollyhock and rhododendron, a pretty lady, gorgeously attired in gala, sleepy as an odalisque, fan and all complete, bounces out of a rose-covered doll's-house and electrifies me with the question—

“Is the prince on board?”

The prince! Were we in England this might mean H.R.H.; here it means Hinoe Pomaré.

Alas! Hinoe Pomaré has other fish to fry. The Papeete world of naughtiness has him in its clutches. Raiatea will have to wait.

## The Ocean of Marama

“That’s a shame,” quoth the odalisque. “Here we are, killing pigs and roasting taro to do him honour, and he doesn’t turn up, the villain!”

Shades of disappointed hostesses! Through the verberna trellis-work pretty faces peer shyly.

“Couldn’t he be replaced by proxy?” suggested the doctor wickedly. A pout and a giggle. Bashfulness has struck the doll’s-house. The flowers swallow them.

Yes, indeed. Raiatea has its own little social importances. It is the cradle of island royalty, the birthplace of the Pomarés, the Mecca of the Polynesians. Besides this it has the reputation of being the second stage of the Tahitian purgatory, of which the first, it will be remembered, was situated on the summit of Mount Rootia in Moorea. A Tahitian’s soul is a restless kind of organism. It is first compelled to make a twelve-mile jump across to Moorea, then a sixty-mile one to Raiatea, and a thirty-mile skip to Tubai, a tiny island-dot in the far west of the group, to finish with.

Here, too—in Raiatea—ruled the Napoleon of the Society Group, the great Tamatoa, a man whose name is so shivered into the traditions of the islands as to cause even now those whom the Raiatea Blue-Book accuses of propinquity to be regarded with superstitious awe.

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Fine fellows these old savages were. Fine, manly, skull-cracking old warriors, whose names recall those of the North-American Indians in arrogant and tooth-loosening hyperbole. Here are a few :—

Tamatoa—tree of iron.

Teriitaria—man of big ears (lit. man-who-can-hear-the-grass-grow).

Tetuanuieaaiteatea — adornment of God (hereditary title of the Pomarés).

Last, but not least—

Teriinuihohonumahana—biter-of-the-sun.

He ought to be able to reach it, anyway.

As may be guessed, viewed by the light of such stupendous ancestry, Raiatea has had its aches. It has even had its revolutions. The last of these occurred in 1895, and was headed by a pertinacious old vagabond named Teraupo—now abiding in Noumea for the benefit of his chilblains. As the British Foreign Office and the angel that watches over the subtleties of island-administration both played a part in it, my readers may find a detailed account interesting.

We will entitle our story—

## CHAPTER XIII

### TERAUPO AND THE UNION JACK

NONE knew how the discontent started. Perhaps in a dollar-bred trader-tiff, perhaps in a case of *lèse-majesté*, perhaps in the dilatory squabbling of French officialdom. Anyway, start it did, and one bright morning in December 1895 all Papeete was electrified by the news that the inhabitants of Raiatea—at Opoa—had hoisted British flags, and were prepared to defy the accumulated force of the earth in general and France in particular.

The French authorities were annoyed. When you have been vegetating for years in a palm-girt island at the back of nowhere, the prospect of fighting—real bullets in flesh and blood—is not pleasant.

The quills of the administration began to rustle and the music of their rustlings struck the British consul as he lay on his trellised verandah, fatigued from the exertions of that morning's bicycle ride.

The consul—W. H. Milson, Esq.—was, as we have stated elsewhere, a man of the mildest type.

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The Commissaire-Général had indited a winning epistle, and Milsom nearly wept as he read it.

“It is supposed,” wrote the man of red-tape ingenuously, “that the inhabitants of Raiatea will recognise the unreasonableness of their attitude as far as help from England is concerned, that they will respect your authority and haul down the flag.”

Milsom thumbed his law-book, fitted a new J-pen into the well-chewed holder, and exploded, as gunpowder explodes, along the line of the least resistance. He wrote a motherly note to Teraupo. It is not necessary to give the contents in full. It was a variant on the pedagogic “If you go on like this, you know, you’ll get yourself into trouble.” Teraupo got the note a week later and used it—as a celebrated historical snob once used a bank-note—to light his pipe with.

The British flag made a picturesque red splotch over the palms of Opoa, and the natives of Tahaa across the strait, recognising the prettiness of such a landmark, followed Teraupo’s example and likewise hoisted a flag.

The French Government growled. Teraupo had organised a regiment of native desperadoes in red shirts—red being the nearest approach to British colours—and armed them with scythes

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and battle-axes. In out-of-the-way villages people were boiling down lead in frying-pans and sharpening up old fish-spears. The girls took to singing "God Save the Queen" as a *himené*, and their ever-increasing taunts incommoded the white ladies of the island. There was a hurried flight of settlers. Some found refuge in Bora-Bora or Huahine; the copra-schooners landed others, angry and rumpled, in Papeete.

Across the hissing network of reefs the two flags still fluttered. Opoa and Tevaitoa were English—quite English. Teraupo had dropped his French garb like a mask. He took to washing regularly, and his wife's five-o'clock teas were the talk of the Broom-road. The French Government lost patience. Milsom was again bombarded, and this time he found himself compelled to put a little more ginger into his remonstrance.

"The forbearance of the authorities having become exhausted," he wrote, "the local administrator has been instructed to take such measures as may be necessary for definitely subjugating the rebellious natives of Raiatea and Tahaa."

Teraupo and his regiment danced. The great moment was at hand! They were to meet the French face to face and eat them.

The *Aubrevilliers* left Papeete with a flourish,

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and dropped anchor before Opoa. Milsom was on board. The mightiness of his mission had infused a warlike spirit into his nature. He forgot to be sea-sick and kicked off his bedclothes slaying imaginary Gorgons. Teraupo must haul down the flag or be smashed. There was no other alternative.

Next morning as the long-boat's keel grated on the coral there were forty bloodthirsty Kanakas with muskets and flower-wreaths assembled on the beach to welcome her. Teraupo's ultimatum was short and decisive.

"Let the English consul come to see me," the message ran; "all others I will kill."

The officer in charge of the boat paled and hesitated. He had barely twenty men with him, and the forty Kanakas looked horribly as though they meant business. The commander of the *Aubrevilliers* hugged himself. Matters were falling out exactly as he wished. Milsom would go on shore, get himself converted into long pig, and then—

Then the village could be shelled, and from a safe distance. The guns of the *Aubrevilliers* were getting rusty from disuse, and a gallant avenging of Queen Victoria's representative would look lovely in print.

Milsom saw matters in a different light. He



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had no wish to be converted into long pig. The French officer in charge of the boat too was visibly affected. He embraced Milsom, whom he loved as a brother, and besought him to run no needless risks. But Britannia's work must be done, and the consul was the man to do it. He left his watch with the officer, dashed away a tear, and started off to face the enemy.

The meeting-house was a fair type of native dwelling—an oval structure of bamboo with a pandanus roof. The parliament, a dozen stalwart Kanakas with scarlet flowers twisted into their snaky locks, squatted contentedly on mats. There was a squeaking of women from the clearing behind where Teraupo's favourite pig was guzzling the remains of last night's feast.

Milsom began a harangue. He besought Teraupo to reconsider his evil ways—to haul down the flag. Teraupo snorted.

Let him give up trying to be English, hand his fish-spear to the commander in token of submission, and become once again a great and loyal Frenchman.

Teraupo laughed and spat. He had hoisted the flag as a means of protection against French aggressiveness, and preferred to let it stay.

“I warn you,” said Milsom brokenly, “if you

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refuse I shall be compelled to haul down the flag myself."

Teraupo spat again and laughed—this time more derisively. At his nod two Kanakas armed with clubs came from a dark recess and stood behind Milsom, chuckling.

Milsom's blood froze. British consuls are only human—sometimes very human. He was very much alone in that vast place, and the clubs were very near. Teraupo, the anglicized, grinned—and it seemed to Milsom that the grin carried cannibalistic suggestions. He rose, and backed towards the door.

The commander of the *Aubrevilliers* had been following the movements of the shore-party through his binocular, and had been anxiously awaiting Milsom's dying yell as a preliminary formality to shelling Teraupo's chicken-coops. To say he was disappointed at the consul's re-appearance would be to put things mildly. He swore hideously.

Milsom, urbane but shaken, clambered on board and explained. Affairs were indeed at an alarming crisis. Teraupo had got his war-paint on. To talk of hauling down the flag was absurd. It was nailed up there as solid as a rock. There was only one resource left—to shoot it down.

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The commander would have preferred to shoot something else—but justice is justice, and it was clearly the flag-staff that was at fault. The six-pounder was loaded and slewed round. Milsom stopped his ears.

Bang! Teraupo's women screamed and an army of pigs fled shrieking. Missed. *Sacré bleu!*

Bang again—ditto. Five bangs. The flag-staff topples and falls. *Vive la France! Vive la Republi-i-ique!*

And now, what Papeete (the French portion of it) wants to know is why their brave sailors didn't land and fight the barbarians, man to beast. What the English traders want to know is why Milsom allowed their flag to be fired on. What the *Aubrevilliers* commander wants to know is why Milsom didn't shin up the pole and get himself converted into long pig on reaching the bottom. What Milsom wants to know—

Well, dash it all! He gets £800 a year for doing it, anyhow.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BORA-BORA AND THE HOOLA-HOOLA

“Strike up the dance! The kava-bowl fill high  
Drain every drop—to-morrow we may die;  
In summer garments be our limbs arrayed,  
Around our waists the Tappa’s white displayed.”

THE *Croix du Sud* left Raiatea the same afternoon. Not without interruption though. As the vessel neared the green strip of shallows marking the reef there was a halloo from shore and the flash of a red blanket among the palms. A tiny canoe, its outrigger almost under water, was skirting the reef with a view to intercepting us before we reached deep water and liberty. One of the men, the second mate I believe, shouted something from the bridge in native, and Captain Pond, the very slightest tinge of impatience in his manner—for he was the most amiable of men—grabbed the handles of the telegraph. As the canoe drew near we could see it contained a girl and a boy.

“Wants to go to Bora-Bora,” grunted the mate—“why couldn’t she have made up her

## Bora-Bora and the Hoola-Hoola

blooming mind before? Tapeka, by all that's lively!"

"Has she money to pay her passage?" queried the captain cautiously—"if not, she can jolly well stay behind. We've had enough of these stow-aways."

The ladder-chains rattled and the girl climbed on deck, the boy handing her up sundry bundles tied up in pareos. One of the bundles squeaked. It was very much alive. The others might have contained clothes, and, to judge by angular excrescences, tins of food. As Tapeka's bare feet trod the dust of the after-deck I caught sight of her face. She was still very young and pretty, with that savage style of prettiness only found in the smaller and more unmolested islands of the group—a prettiness consisting of round puffed-out cheeks, woolly hair, and lips that seem made for anything rather than kissing.

She looked very ill, very fagged, and worn. She was not unknown to the men of the *Croix du Sud* either. Her record in Papeete had been brilliant—and bad. Also fate had dealt hardly with her.

Now she paused, drew from her bundle three isolated Chile dollars, passed them to the mate, and with a grin which the malpractice of years had worn into a scowl, climbed the bridge and

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descended with her baby into the fore-castle. Had she been of a sensitive nature she might possibly have jibbed at the way in which the two missionaries' wives, anæmic-looking ladies in loose white gowns, drew their virtuous skirts aside as her red robe threatened to brush the fringe. As it was, she merely said "*iorana*" and vanished down the ladder. A moment later she was waving a draggled handkerchief to the boy over the lee bulwarks. We were under way again as though nothing had happened.

"That's the way with these creatures," soliloquised the doctor cynically as the roar of Raiatea reef sounded behind us—"they make a bee-line for Papeete as soon as they're able to toddle, and go cruising round till some fellow leaves them in the lurch, then back they go to their blooming island and ship off a cargo of their relations to follow their example. I hate the whole lot of them, by G—I do. Beasts—that's what they are, beasts!"

I cannot pretend (a fact for which I had reason to be thankful later) to having precisely echoed my worthy companion's sentiments, but then I was new to the islands and he was not. Here too—alas!—familiarity sometimes breeds contempt.

The mate of the *Croix du Sud* was a smart

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fellow, with curly hair and dancing black eyes—*l'homme à femmes* to the tips of his fingers. The captain met him in the companion.

“No nonsense this trip, Jessop, eh? We've ladies on board, mind.”

“Ay ay, sir. She paid her fare all right, sir.”

“I know. Wouldn't have let her on board otherwise. Had enough of that game, savvy?”

The mate grinned. At 2 P.M. the twin peak of Bora-Bora peered shyly from behind the palms of Tahaa. Chancing to pass the cabin of the second mate, a man named Lakin, the curtains parted and I caught the white fire of a double row of teeth in the opening. Tapeka had found friends.

At 4.30 we dropped anchor in the harbour of Bora-Bora, before the long whitewashed abomination that does duty for schoolhouse. Right overhead towered Mount Pahua, its yellow, velvety buttresses falling sheer into the sea of palms and yellow-blossomed buraos. Farther along the undulating coast-line tiny bouquets of shrubbery rose from patches of shallow, leading away to where, dim on the southern sky-line, rose the blue triangle of the Tubai-Manou, the last and loneliest soul-asylum in the Tahitian Hereafter.

The boat put us ashore at the rough jetty of

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stone, where a few half-naked boys were amusing themselves fishing with sticks of bamboo and bent pins. Tapeka was one of the party. Unlike what we had experienced in Huahine, there was no welcoming crowd to receive us. The place looked singularly deserted. The long lines of burao-trees fringing the beach-road melted imperceptibly into the tangled sea of undergrowth whence the tall palms shot skywards at intervals like rockets. Not a sound, not a native, not a single solitary flower-crowned lady to welcome us.

Indeed, there was an all-sufficient reason for this. We had landed on an awkward day, at an awkward hour.

Bora-Bora was at Sunday-school.

Very proper too! What a pity, like many beautiful things, the goodness of these dear innocents didn't bear a little more looking into. *Vanitas vanitatum*. And yet the outward signs were pretty enough. The sobbing cadence of voices through the bread-fruit, the gleaming white walls, and scattered dots of children sitting or lying outside the school-door.

Shall I tell it? There are some things about these paradises which one shrinks from relating, but it often happens that these are just the very things one ought to lay particular stress on. They are so thoroughly, so *very* thoroughly



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Society-islandese. Here it is—and don't tell Exeter Hall.

We were waiting, oh, so demurely, *so* patiently, on the grass plot outside that school while the army of young ladies inside warbled *himené* after *himené* and the native teacher talked and talked. It seemed to me he must be trying to talk the ocean dry. And so good his flock were too! Jessop tried to ogle the nearest one through the door, but the venture fell as flat as Koko in the "Mikado." Not a smile, not a wink. Only a drooping of the long lashes and a renewed study of the lesson-book.

We were desperate. "What are you fellows waiting for?" queried a gallant trader of the devil-may-care sort, slouching up, hands in pockets, his broad hat tilted comfortably over his eyes.

We explained, in all modesty. We wished to see the sweetness of the land and pay our respects to it. Also take snapshots. But not on any account would we interrupt——

The trader scratched his head. "If you'll swear not to tell my wife," he said, "I'll engage to fetch 'em out."

We thrilled. The proposition looked wonderfully, deliciously wicked. A second later we blushed. The trader threw his hat on the

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ground, walked unceremoniously into the school-house, grabbed that innocent maundering native teacher by the arm and—shook him!

So violent was the shake that the poor gentleman's book (I believe he was a "reverend" too) flew one way and his spectacles the other. When he recovered, he turned to his flock and shouted out something which I suppose was a dismissal. Anyway, up jumped those young ladies with an alacrity which either argued ill for their piety or the teacher's eloquence—I don't know which. And once outside! What winks! What antics! Wha-a-at frolics on the green! Who would have recognised a bevy of converted South Sea proselytes interrupted on the road to Parnassus and Paradise!

Bora-Bora, being on the uttermost fringe of the eastern Pacific island-world, makes a rather good place for a short stay. It is perhaps more truly native than any of the others of the group, and here, thank Heaven, there is only a slender sprinkling of those poetry-destroying iron roofs to make the landscape hideous. Once clear of the village and fairly out in the woods, all is typically Robinson Crusoe. The long bamboo-walled huts, the parties of fishermen mending their nets on the white coral curves, the naked brown babies sprawling on mats, the women with

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baskets of taro, the long clumsy canoes and curiously shaped paddles—it is an exotic doll's-house which the story-books of our infancy have taught us to wander in, the pretty savagery of nature beside which the workaday realities of our modern world seem impertinent and *de trop*.

And this—our blameless worship at the shrine of the eternally-natural—brought us to the threshold of our evening's entertainment, a hoola-hoola.

The trader beguiled us of course. Dances of a really typical kind are none too easily arranged, and the searcher after knowledge is oftentimes obliged to have recourse to diplomacy. The saintly brotherhood of missionaries don't exactly encourage this kind of devilment. Worse than that—on some islands the hoola-hoola is sternly repressed by law—and in Papeete the sight of a parcel of sorrowful beauties elbowed along by a majestic half-caste policeman is one of the most touching the market has to show. Here, however, island-law is at its thinnest, and Bora-Bora morality is (shades of Bernardin de Saint Pierre!) at least the equivalent of the French.

We had our hoola all right. It was placarded to begin at midnight and we spent the preliminary hours fortifying ourselves with gin and bitters in the cabin of the *Croix du Sud*. Gin and bitters

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help scenery wonderfully. The row ashore was an impressive experience. Nowhere are nights so exquisite as in the Pacific. By way of enhancing the magic of drifting flower-scents and twinkling shore-lights it was full moon, and the water where the oars struck it blazed with silver fire. This time at all events there was nothing ambiguous about our reception. The jetty was lined with vahines in all stages of gala-attire. On the lawn before the Chinaman's (it is the only establishment of the kind Bora-Bora has to show, butcher's shop, draper's, and furniture-emporium rolled into one) wicks of paraffin were burning. Benches for the spectators had been stolen from the schoolhouse. Among the more eager ones were the captain, the doctor, and the two missionaries' wives. The presence of the latter at this ultra-mundane entertainment shook me up a bit at first, but they explained that they were new to the islands and bent on following the native character to ground at any cost—so I let it go at that and apologised.

A dull booming sound came from the darkness of the palms. There is nothing peculiarly musical about the tone of the native drum, but on this unique occasion the surroundings lent it a weird mystery. The tall forms of white-robed women crept noiselessly into the outer rim of lamplight.



*A Hoola-hoola, Tahiti.*



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There were sheeted-ghost suggestions about their slender wrappings that jarred disagreeably at first, but a nearer inspection presently showed them in a livelier light. The costumes were much the same as those worn by the Papeete market-contingent, an extra allowance of bangles and a floating plume of *riva-riva* being the only noticeable additions. The latter is a preparation of coco-nut fibre and the nearest thing in the world to homely tissue-paper, though the name lends it originality. Two Kanakas armed with mouth-organs came forward and saluted. The dance began.

The men and women were drawn up facing each other. Through her disguise of drapery I recognised Tapeka, whose failing health didn't apparently suffice to damp her spirits. The dance is difficult to do justice to in print. It begins demurely enough—a slow undulating swaying movement, left to right and back again, a jelly-fish waving of the arms and a sideward gathering-in of the long skirts to exhibit the lissome figure—

“ Strait-laced, but all too full in blood  
For puritanic stays”—

as far as propriety permits. The men respond, making corresponding gestures—far less gracefully, however, and looking abominably prosaic

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in their blue overalls and straw hats. The falling coloured pareo, where worn, is more endurable. Thank Heaven! the moonlight redeems things. Presently the mouth-organs strike a livelier tune. The dance begins to animate. Isolated girls spring out from the group and begin improvising *al fresco*, each trying to outdo her neighbour in the complexity or audacity of her figures. There is a kind of shake—a triple-expansion quiver beginning at the head and ending at the heels—which comes in very effectively here. Also it is an excuse for innuendo. A neat compliment, according to Bora-Borian ideas, is for a girl to get in front of you, cross her arms, stare you straight in the face, and shake till her floating cloud of *riva-riva* rustles like aspen, and her whole form seems wrapped in a luminous halo of quivering, flashing drapery. Our worthy Captain Pond—a bit of a lady-killer on the quiet, though his wife doesn't know it—was among the more favoured ones. Girl after girl took up her station in front of him, smiled winningly, and shook herself till the rest of us jealously hoped and prayed she would shake herself to pieces. This sort of thing ends in two ways. Either the beauty retires warm, blushing, and exhausted, amid plaudits from the crowd, or else she loses her head completely and, tearing off some portion



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of her floral caparison, flings it shyly into your lap in token of her deep and innocent affection.

Have the Bora-Borians acquired the language of flowers? I don't know. They have certainly invented one. But does the pale island-gardenia with its lily-like suggestions serve as emblem of a passion which the glowing hibiscus, the rose, the carnation, might surely expound more aptly?

Those lovely tiaré-flowers! One attribute at least is theirs which to the cynically minded might appear truthful enough. They fade quickly. One short half-hour in your button-hole will kill off the most exuberant bloom that ever embalmed the air. At least, it will kill the outward form. The aroma, the soul of the flower, remains, and with the magic of memory to aid it, may possibly cause heart-ache. Better not keep them. *Latet anguis in floribus*—there is a latent anguish in flowers. What need to wait till your dream wither in the breath of the smoke-girt city? Drop them in the cool sea. Peace will come to heart and fireside alike.

No—save to hyper-æsthetic missionarydom—there is nothing especially improper about the hoola if carried out under classical island rules. But then there is the by-play. The impromptu present of a bunch of flowers of doubtful import is embarrassing enough no doubt, but to feel,

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while you sit bolt upright by the virtuous side of a European duenna, the slender fingers of a vahine tangling your back hair, is truly maddening. On these occasions it is the height of bad policy to turn and rebuke the nymph. She won't take the snub, and it only advertises matters. No, you must grin and bear it. When the dance is over shake her off—if you can.

And here the inevitable trader steps in and takes me down from fairyland by informing me that what we were witnessing was not the genuine hoola, only a base and civilised counterfeit. The real thing, it appears, is not permitted to be performed on any account. "But what does that matter?" genially, "you've seen the girls. That's all you want."

A consoling philosophy, in sooth! Like the supposed talking parrot who couldn't talk, but "was a beggar to think." Blow high, blow low, there is generally a fairy of consolation waiting round the corner for him who seeks. I am glad we saw the hoola, and in default of the wicked original am well pleased to put up with the harmless civilised version as a substitute.

## CHAPTER XV

“PAHE RAA TAI” (THE EBBING OF THE TIDE)

“The palm waxes, the coral grows—  
But man departs.”

—*Tahitian saying.*

OUR trip, the doctor's and mine, ended in Bora-Bora for the present. A month would elapse before the *Croix du Sud* would come to restore me to the civilities of French infantry officers in Papeete. I knew nothing of the island, but had letters of introduction to several settlers, one of them—a Yankee named Morgan—being the champion copra-fiend of the district, and a noted authority on vanilla. The population of Bora-Bora is Kanaka to the backbone, *i.e.* neither rich nor poor, unenterprising, unambitious, and lazy. There is a queen of course—a descendant of Tetanui—who doesn't live in the island, and who couldn't do much harm if she did. The principal export is copra, and, as in Tahiti, no attempt has been made to modernise or perfect the manner of its preparation. Here, too, the major portion of the available land is allowed to go naturally and beautifully to seed. There is,

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as at Huahine, a *marae*, founded by Orotefa, a historical swell with religious leanings *à la* Torquemada. The social element is composed of some half-a-dozen traders and an equal number of Celestials, and to them the beauty and fashion of the island turn for consolation as Kensington does to the "inner set," or midland villages to the curate and master of the hounds in our own country.

The great twin-peak of Pahua dominates everything, an idol for heathenism, a landmark for wandering sailors—once seen, never forgotten. Pahua has its story. It is said in former ages to have been the residence of the first and brightest of Bora-Bora landlords, the Sun-god Raa (how about Rā of the Egyptians, Messrs. Haggard and Lang?). Raa's ideas, unlike those of his descendants, were essentially progressive. This brought about his ruin. A jealousy on some minor point of celestial etiquette put a term to his lease. Raa hurled himself from the peak of Pahua and vanished. His present residence is unknown to authorities.

While reflecting on the providential beauty of these occurrences I was wandering undecidedly along the Broom-road between the glare of the beach and the deep shade of the forest. I had no idea where Morgan lived, but trusted to

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chance, or the willingness of kindly minded natives to enlighten me. Passing a house buried deep in shade, my eye caught the well-known gleam of a scarlet dress. A girl stepped into the light. It was Tapeka. The ragged silhouettes of the bread-fruit leaves pricked out her thin form in mottled patches of light. She looked even paler, more emaciated, than on the previous day. A native boy of ten or twelve, shreds of fern woven into his unkempt locks, followed at her heels.

I showed her the letter. She tried to decipher the address, sliding one arm lovingly around the boy's neck as she did so. The youngster was clearly a relation of hers. She was in her native island—a sort of returning princess, no less.

She handed me back the letter and tried a smile, but a dreadful fit of coughing took her and forced her to lean against the wall of the hut for support. In these lost atolls of the Pacific, the old Arab maxims of hospitality hold good. The stranger comes from God. She said something in broken gasps to the boy, who dived into the house like a rabbit, and returned with a snowy crown of tiaré-flowers. Tapeka smiled.

“Coulonne Bola-Bola, ça va bien,” she said with indiscriminate massacrations of the *r* as she handed me the crown.

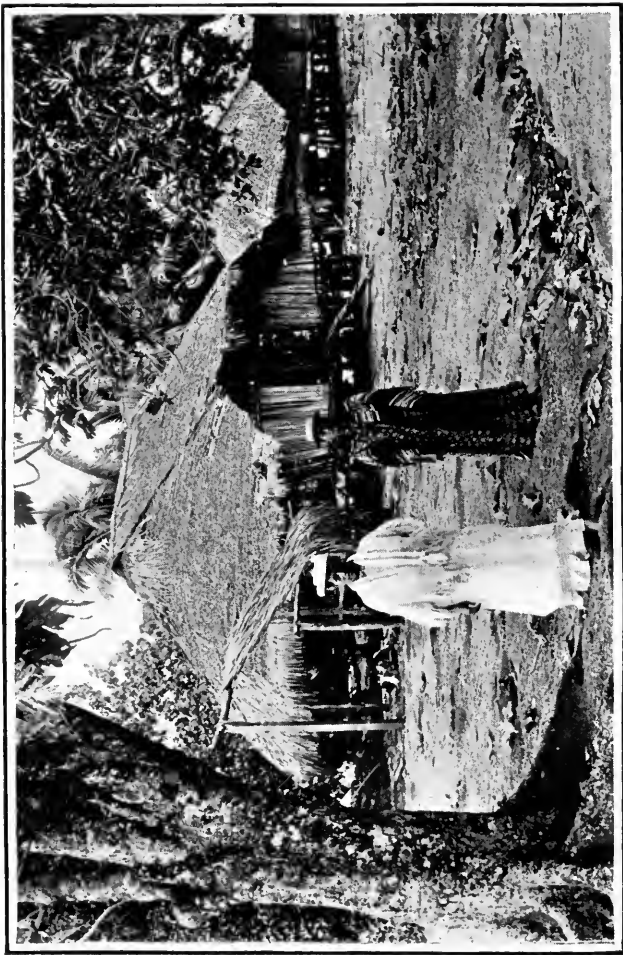
## The Log of an Island Wanderer

I put the thing round the brim of my straw hat, albeit with some misgivings, for I had no desire to pose as a lunatic should we be unlucky enough to get pounced upon by Morgan or any other settler.

The girl was coughing on a bole. Now she rose, balanced herself playfully on her heel, and started off along the path, motioning me to follow. Considering her poor state it was kind of her to volunteer as guide. We strolled along under the dark covering of leaves which glistened here and there from the reflected glare of the beach. At the mouth of a shallow valley, under some spreading willows, a handful of men were squatting on mats sorting newly-dredged shells. Tapeka stopped to exchange salutations, while the small boy slashed with his stick at a bush of flowering hibiscus, and grinned like a cannibal.

It struck me to wonder what Tapeka had done with her baby. Left it in some hut along the road, perhaps. Certainly she was too weak to carry it. We said good-bye to the men, and stumbled on over the spreading banyan roots which covered the ground everywhere like mammoth spiders' webs. Tapeka's hair was wet and draggled. On her forehead the drops of perspiration stood out like beads.

There was the glint of a pandanus roof between



*Beach Road, Bora-Bora.*





## Pahe raa tai

the trees, and the shrill squeals of a litter of pigs scampering into the underbrush. An old woman, her front teeth disfigured by unsightly gaps, came to meet us, followed by a demure child chewing a piece of water-melon. As Tapeka turned to me I could see her eyes were shining. The long lashes drooped.

“Ma mère,” she said in French. The old dame shook hands while Tapeka panted on a seat. Then she muttered something, went into the house and brought out a coco-nut, which I drank more for amiability’s sake than thirst. I was loth to bother the girl further, but as I made a move to continue my way she jumped up, ran after me, and took my arm. Clearly she was determined to see me through, if it cost her her life.

At the deepest recess of the bay, under the shadow of a wooded hill, was something that looked like the promise of an avenue. As I turned up to Morgan’s I saw the last I was ever fated to see of Tapeka in health and strength—the flourish of red between the dark leaves, the glimmer of sunlight on the white hat with its halo of enveloping flowers, and, at the very moment the trees swallowed her, that terrible paroxysm of coughing that winged its way through the flower-scented air like a death-warning.

Morgan received me kindly. He made ar-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

rangements for lodging me at a creeper-clad villa opposite the Vaitape wharf, belonging to an absent trader-cousin, and took me through some phases of his private life as a copra-planter. The open hospitality of these men is almost embarrassing to the new-comer. It takes some weeks for you to realise that it is the outer world, not yourself, that your host is saluting. You are the solitary link that binds him to home, family, and the blessings of civilisation, and he worships you accordingly. No use rhapsodising over the pictorial possibilities of his island. He is long dead to them, and won't sympathise.

Three days later, coming back to Vaitape through the bread-fruit, I chanced to pass Tapeka's hut. She was lying on a mat in the shade, her younger sister bending over her with a fan of plaited palm-leaf. Inside the hut the old woman was preparing food. They were all very silent, and the customary greeting came from unwilling lips. Tapeka's cheeks were hollower than usual, and this time she dared not smile.

On the following afternoon I met the doctor. Perhaps he guessed what was uppermost in my mind, for he began without preamble.

"These people's constitutions are wretched," he said; "if it was a civilised Anglo-Saxon woman I might have pulled her through, but it's

## Pahe raa tai

the natural cussedness of these natives that outwits me. She's simply letting herself slide. It's my opinion the girl doesn't want to live."

I found nothing to say. The rude winsomeness of Tapeka's manner had done its work. I choked and felt silly. "Have you been to see her?" I said.

"I have. Father Bonnefin's with her now. He's the priest that brought her up. I'm afraid it's all u-p."

There was no sleep for me that night. The heat under that roof was like a foretaste of the Inferno. To soften matters there were no curtains to my bed and the z—z—zp! of a mosquito brought me to life whenever I thought of dropping off. Towards one in the morning something stumbled into the room, barking their shins against my trunk and swearing hoarsely.

"I say, P——, are you awake, old man? There's trouble up yonder. You haven't got such a thing as a hypodermic syringe in your kit? No, of course not. Why should you? Mine's broke. Hi! Johnny—hold on a bit."

The Kanaka dropped on the grass in a heap. The doctor threw himself into the solitary easy-chair, and wiped his face. There was a thrill of tragedy in the wind. "Is the girl dying?" I said.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

“By inches,” was the reply. “I had intended to let her go easy with morphine, but the point of my syringe is nipped off, and she’ll have to do without. What she wants now is a decent burial.”

Still with that grimness of tragedy gnawing at my vitals, I dressed and lit a cigar. My hand shook a bit, and as I handed a light to the doctor he noticed it. “You’d better not come, P——,” he said, “if you’re not proof.”

What element of conceit makes a man believe himself of use in all cases and under all circumstances? We plunged off into the night, the gaunt shadow of the mountain above us and the scattered mist of star-jewellery seeming to dwarf everything in grandeur and purity. It was as dark as a wolf’s mouth, but the flicker of light on the Kanaka’s bundle as he stepped across the bands of moonlight guided us. There were lights in Tapeka’s hut and rows of pareos squatting under the trees. On a long bed of matting lay something—and over it bent an old woman, weeping. As she saw the doctor she threw up her hands and over her face crept a glory of hope. A short squat man, his angular features bathed in the smoky glare of the lamp, knelt at the foot of the couch. It was Father Bonnefin. Tapeka’s sister and two other children crouched in a corner,

## Pahe raa tai

and in their midst something small stirred under a heap of blankets.

“Pack all that crowd out of here,” said the man of medicine unceremoniously, and in a second the hut was cleared. The old woman ceased weeping. No sound broke the silence but the muttered words of the priest and the buzzing of flies under the roof-thatch. The doctor had intended to administer morphine, but to judge from the quiet helplessness of the sufferer there was no longer any need for that. However, he did what he could. He cut the thin arms with a lancet and poured morphine into the cuts. The mother clasped her hands in adoration. How could she know the act meant kindly annihilation?

The poison had a contrary effect to what might have been expected. Tapeka's eyes opened. The light from one of the torches without struck through an interstice in the bamboo, and as it did so a tiny wail rose from the bundle in the corner. Tapeka's head turned and an eager look came into her eyes. The baby was brought and held out to her. One of the weak hands caught the trailing fringe of the blanket, and the ghost of a smile broke over the girl's face as she tried to draw the child towards her.

I saw the doctor's arm slide out warningly. There were reasons—and reasons, why Tapeka

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could not be allowed to kiss her baby. The cruelty was humanity in its widest and purest sense. The expression in the eyes changed from longing to a wild terrified vindictiveness. The lips moved, but the priest closed them with the crucifix and the sleep of eternity brought relief to the tortured heart.

Tapeka died.

The first rays of dawn were fringing the hill above us as we passed home through the wood. Far out to sea the peaks of distant islands flashed to life one by one as the light kissed their summits. Groups of natives were loitering before the Chinaman's or talking in knots on the lawn in front of the schoolhouse. The doctor turned to me abruptly and—

“Do you think these people have a soul?” he said.

From the little whitewashed building buried in its clump of odorous frangipani the strokes of a bell came to our ears. It was Sunday morning. In a short hour the people would be crowding like little children to sing the praises of Him who, pure as the waters of this fairy sea, has mercy in His heart for every creature that breathes.

## CHAPTER XVI

### AN INTERLUDE

“And yet they came unsought, and with me grew  
And made me all that they can make—a name.”

THE *Croix du Sud* reached Papeete, December 2. A new vessel was in port, the American war-ship *Albatross*, chartered by Professor Agassiz for the purpose of investigating the mysteries of South Sea Island coral formations.

The authorities were in a state of dance. The *Albatross* had, with a confidence bred from purity of motive, dropped anchor opposite the post-office, on a spot unluckily sacred to the presence of a certain French cruiser, then on circuit in the Marquesas.

The round of moustache-tugging began. This pretended investigation of coral reefs looked singularly dark and murderous. Before the *Albatross* had well finished tightening her hawsers no one in the army of red-tape had any doubts but that her sole purpose in visiting the island was to spy out the weakness of the land

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

and prepare for a future sweeping of inky-fingered officials into the Pacific dust-bin.

Explanations were demanded. The commander went on shore to interview the governor, and the latter—somewhat nervously—returned the compliment by allowing Mr. Agassiz's neat Herreshoff launch to spirit him on board the *Albatross*. They showed him the guns and he shuddered, a shudder that not even the fact that there were no cartridges on board to load them had hostilities been intended could properly dispel. He was shown the museum, the tank of fishes, the sounding apparatus. Americans are people of dreadful ways. The governor went on shore in a hurry, a fact that annoyed the commander, who had gone to the trouble of getting special cocktails mixed for the interview.

Things were further complicated by several of the *Albatross's* officers going ashore on the following day to take declination measurements. There was a silver-flashing policeman waiting for them under the sycamores. The dipping-needle, in its case of polished mahogany with brass binding, looked singularly dangerous. There was a polite interview, punctuated with bows and scrapes. The officers, rather ruffled, fizzed their way back on board. Surveying was declared off for the time being.



## An Interlude

Meanwhile the English colony of Papeete had got their enthusiasm up to concert-pitch. The Yankee savants were fêted like heroes. A splendid picnic was organised in Mr. Atwater's residence at the entrance to the Fantaua Valley. A tent fifty yards long, flashing in all the colours of the rainbow, was hung between the stems of the mango trees. The American officers found out what it is like to sit cross-legged on a mat before a table a foot high, while discreet servant-girls in flowing blue robes crowned their republican brows with wreaths of tiaré or jasmine. They learned to appreciate sea-scorpions boiled in coconut milk, and fish served raw with the addition of a little vinegar. The French officials ceased to scowl. Clearly there was not much harm in these men. Papeete decided to take Agassiz to its bosom.

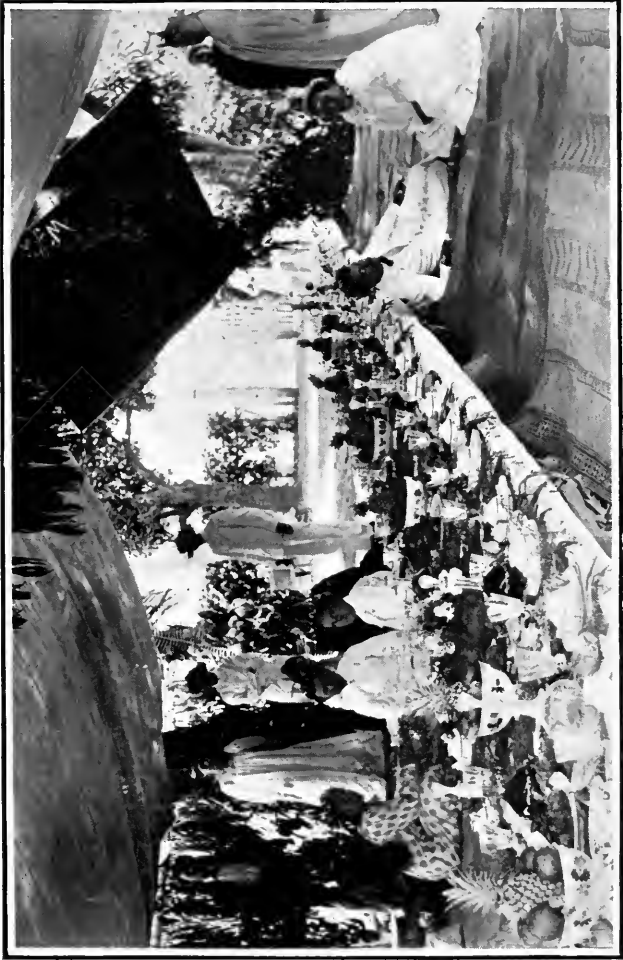
From the higher tiers of Society hospitality settled groundwards. The long-shore men chummed in with the *Albatross's* foc'sle hands. One of these chummings terminated serio-comically. "Dodger" Raynes, a man of many shifts, invited four engine-room hands to dine with him at Yet Lee's—the long-suffering Chow whose dyspepsia - breeding establishment fronts the market.

Raynes, among other things, was not in the

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

habit of paying for the food he ate, and being a regular man, had no intention of doing so now. In the midst of wine, victuals, and anecdotes the formality of the bill became overlooked. Raynes put his hat on his head and, a look of blank innocence on his face, sidled thoughtfully into the street. Three of the guests immediately followed. There are limits even to a Chinaman's patience. Grabbing hold of the last remaining sailor, Yet Lee demanded, in an excited voice and manner, who was going to pay the piper. The flashing eyes and weird cigarette-box gestures of the Celestial were too much for the Yankee. His fist struck the bridge of Yet Lee's nose and the Chow went over like a shot rabbit. Yet Lee's assistant "Kitty" went for an axe, and the fun began in real earnest. The street was choked with an army of struggling, rioting humanity. Kitty's axe did wonders, and within a very few minutes several of the *Albatross's* sailors were bleeding like stuck pigs. Next morning on reaching the American vessel I found Rodman, the chief officer, shaving in his cabin and very perplexed. There was a neat pile of papers lying on the table, which told me the authorities had not been idle.

"What am I to do?" said the chief comically as the steward brought in the inevitable tray of



*A Picnic, Fantasia.*



## An Interlude

cocktails. "Each one of these fellows tells a different story." Then, with a sudden burst of inspiration—"I tell you how we'll manage it. You've got a blue coat on your back. We'll have 'em in one by one and I'll play you off for a French official. All you've got to do is to mind your cue and—look important."

And so, for the first and last time in my life, I obtained, by proxy, a situation under the wing of that great and free Republic.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ISLES OF THIRST—A RUN IN A NATIVE SCHOONER

“ Her flag ? I had no glass, but fore and aft,  
Egad ! She looked a wicked-looking craft.”

THE Pacific ! It is a sublime word to describe a sublime sea, and yet it doesn't seem to fit, somehow. It was during one of the *Ovalau's* fly-away visits to Papeete that Captain Macduff took me to his cabin and showed me the chart.

It looked horribly complicated. Every inch of the paper was crammed with figures and arrows and crosses till you began to wonder whatever could induce any reasoning being to try navigation in such a devil of a sea.

“ Pooh ! That's nothing ! ” laughed the captain.  
“ Wait till you see the Paumotus.”

The Paumotus ! I had seen them in my mind's eye already, scores of times. The name had branded itself on my imagination in a hundred tales of wreck and loneliness. Then, as rumour shaped itself to fact, I learned that the Paumotus are a crescent-shaped group of islands some two hundred miles to the east of Tahiti, an embryo

## The Isles of Thirst

French protectorate, dangerous enough to wreck the fleets of the earth and lonely enough to drive isolated settlers to suicide.

The group is all the more striking owing to the contrast its scenery presents with that of the lovely Society Islands. Here there are no lofty mountains to frame a sylvan paradise of fruit and flowers. Here you find no shady, flirtation-provoking alleys, no streams, no milky cascades or cold pools—not even a pond or a solitary puddle. Everything is dry, waterless, forbidding, and lonely. The land is so low as to be quite invisible, even at a few miles' distance. The slender line of green formed by the serrated tops of the coco-palms is the first to appear, then the long line of white sand and the reef with its rolling breakers.

One of the most exasperating facts connected with the group is the nomenclature. Each island has a bushel of names, and few charts agree as to which is the right one. The very designation of the archipelago is open to argument. It is variously called the Low Archipelago, *l'Archipel Dangereux*, the Paumotu, and the Tuamotu Islands. The latter two titles are the most used, and even here there is an antiquarian squabble for preferment. It is connected with a native conceit, of course. When, in the year

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

one, these islands were first conquered by the Tahitian pioneers, their humiliation was branded on posterity under the title Po-motu (conquered islands). The adjective displeased the natives. Though clad in a breezy pareo, and dowered with the activity of his cousin the turtle, the Pomotuan possesses the pride of a Spanish grandee. A delegation was got up, and now, after a century of wrangling, they have been graciously permitted to change it to Tuamotu (far-off islands).

The group numbers some twenty respectable atolls varying from ten to forty miles in diameter, and a hundred smaller sand-dabs. Surveying operations have been very incomplete in parts, and not all the fortitude of a score of French Government schooners has been able to chivy the majority of the islands into their correct position on paper. This makes navigation interesting. Steam connection between the various inhabited parts of the group is beautifully rare. The Union steamer *Rotoava* plies regularly between a few of the more important atolls, including Anaa (Chain Island), Makemo, Fakarava, and Hikueru, the latter being the nucleus of the pearl-shell industry. The smaller islands, Vahitahi, Nukutavaki, Ahunui, &c., are only visited by occasional native schooners in search



## The Isles of Thirst

of copra, and as the navigational science of a native skipper is several degrees more sketchy than his attire, I doubt whether a voyage in one of their barques would commend itself to the many. Only an idiot would trust himself to the mercies of a Kanaka skipper. Of late years the annals of Tahiti only record the case of one solitary idiot who had the hardihood to do this. That idiot was myself.

I don't know what persuaded me to try my luck that way—perhaps a dare-devil spirit of recklessness, perhaps a genuine love of inquiry, perhaps merely a spell of impatience attendant on waiting for the Union boat to start.

It was in Lambert's saloon on the edge of the Papeete market that I first met the skipper of the *Vaitipe*. He was a fine specimen of Kanaka manhood, tall and bronzed as a South Sea Apollo, with a pair of gleaming black eyes and a row of cannibal teeth that sparkled in the lamplight in a way that left no doubt of his earnestness. He had come in his frail barque all the way from Flint Island, a matter of a thousand miles or so, and was bound for Hikueru on a pearl-trading contract. We were bosom friends inside of ten minutes, and went for a tour round the market, where he "stuck" me for a ten-cent. phonograph ditty and three slices of pink water-melon—the

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

latter being a gift to his adoring harem. There were half-a-score of obliging damsels hanging suggestively around, one or two of whom the skipper's gift of blarney had talked from their home in the distant Marquesas. He ignored them superbly, and yarned about shark-fishing in a way that went to my heart. I retired to bed with my eyes full of early-navigator fire. To sail in a real copra-schooner, to fish for sea-monsters, to land on nameless islands and carry off ladies in Viking fashion—it seemed romantic enough to knock spots out of Ballantyne. I would go, if it cost me my life.

Next day there was a sickly white two-masted tub straining at her moorings opposite D. & E.'s store, with three pink ladies squatting on the grass, and a native boy doing a hymn to the rising sun on a comb over the counter. Pedro Makete (he must have been of Chilian descent) met me on deck, and gripped my hand like a brother. The *Vaitipe* was a cutter-rigged vessel of some fifty tons burden. She was loaded heavily with lumber and fruit—to both of which the Paumotus are strangers—and her after-deck was smothered under an immense striped awning, to protect the heaps of pine-apples with their nucleus of buzzing wasps from the glare. He showed me my cabin. It was a stuffy kennel,

## The Isles of Thirst

measuring some six feet by eight, its walls frescoed with coloured female portraits torn from soap advertisements. There were four white painted bunks and a rude table stained with the marks of last night's beer-glasses. In one of the bunks a broken sextant was sandwiched cheerfully between two biscuit tins and a suit of dirty overalls. The indicator scale was encrusted with green marks, and some wire contrivance on the vernier told me it had been subjected to a process of amateur tinkering. The overpowering odour of bananas filled everything, and there was a suggestion of pigs in the foc'sle that made me feel bilious. Pedro waved his hand proudly in the direction of a locker filled with preserved beef-tins. "Plenty food there," he said with a grin. I didn't feel quite easy in my mind, but the adventure was entertaining, and had to be gone through with.

As I reappeared on deck I found an audience to receive me. Three more Kanakas and their ladies had come to criticise and offer suggestions. A few clerks from the store lounged up and made frivolous remarks. Besides the skipper of the *Vaitipe* there was a Kanaka in football rig, a black cook with Chinese eyes, and a small stout Moorean with féfé-like suggestions about his legs. The latter gentleman was dibbling for sprats over the side, but rose and said "*iorana*"

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

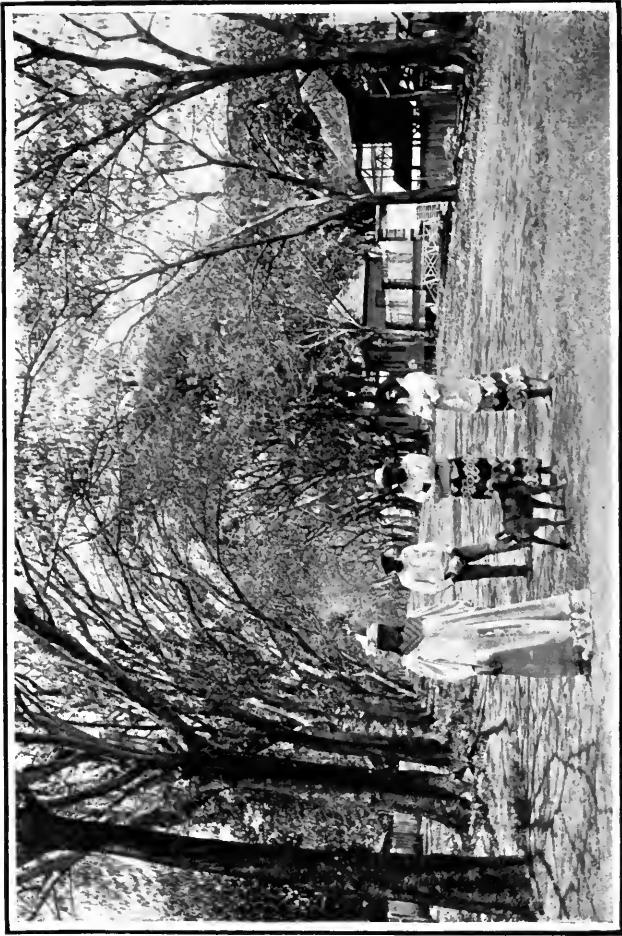
in a tone that left no alternative but to instantly shake hands with him. It struck me that in my neat ducks and white umbrella I must look rather quaint. Three men from the club on their way to lunch at the hotel stopped to admire me. One of them—De Smidt—an inveterate partner in my crimes, laughed cynically. “Good G—, man, you’re not going to sail in that tub?”

I explained, and said I thought it romantic.

“Oh, you’ll get all the romance you need before you’re through,” was the reply. “Come along to lunch now. It’ll be the last Christian meal you’ll have for a month.”

I allowed myself to be convinced, and joined them. I packed my trunk, locked my house, and hired a Kanaka to convey my belongings down to the wharf. A French officer put in an appearance, and made me open my valise to see whether I had any dynamite concealed there. After that I had to undo a roll of blankets to prove that I wasn’t trying to smuggle farinaceous substances duty free. I made the official smell my notebook and count my collars. Then I felt safe.

The thermometer might have been at 100° in the shade. Along the decks of the *Vaitipe* the pitch was running cheerfully in parallel lines. Some one had brought an accordion to the rescue, and the panting refrain of the market hoola



*Avenue Bruat, Yapeete.*



## The Isles of Thirst

mingled comically with Pedro's gigantic jerks as he tried to hoist the dirty sails. As the hawsers were cast off the vessel gave one or two hysterical rolls, and I sat down violently on the pitch-streaked deck. I rose, striped like a zebra. The romance was beginning, sure enough. When I recovered myself, it was to see the rows of trees sliding away, and the vessel's prow heading for the reef-opening.

Pedro took her out neatly enough, though he didn't bother getting the signals in line. The sea was rolling in solid blue combers, the wind was from the west, and as the Paumotus lie nearly due east from Tahiti, was theoretically bound to help us. Besides our cargo of pigs and fruit we carried about half-a-ton of corrugated iron for roofing. The vessel rolled fearfully, and as the palms of Point Venus hove in sight I began to feel very sea-sick. Pedro sat in the companion, his boots sticky with pitch, and smoked a peculiarly venomous pipe. In the opening of the hatchway appeared a female face with wet masses of hair clinging to her forehead. I recognised one of the damsels of last night. In the light of day she appeared very homely, and as the wind shifted in gusts something told me that the layer of oil in her hair wanted renewing.

I pulled out my notebook and tried to jot

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

down details of the scenery. We were crossing the mouth of one of the deeper valleys, and high in the clouds the blue Diadem appeared like a pale shadow. The sun was low, and the cloud-shadows saddled the sloping ribs in irregular splotches. The damsel in pink—her name was Taaroa—came and stretched herself with friendly intent at full length on the planking beside me. Presently she rose and made a dive for the bulwarks. Peace flowed in on me. When one is suffering from sea-sickness oneself, the sight of some one else in like agony acts as a consoler.

The sun went down before we lost sight of Tahiti. Something that smelt sickening was frying in a pan in the galley. There was a flare of light in the doorway as a Kanaka in blue trousers stepped out with a smoking tin in his arms. The pigs on the deck yelled protest. The *Vaitipe* lurched heavily; the Kanaka nearly lost the tin, but caught it again as its contents were alighting on the back of a hog. Pedro's face appeared at the hatchway. "Dinner ready, sah," he said.

I didn't feel like dinner, but thought it would look land-lubberly not to make an effort, and climbed downstairs into that dreadful cabin with its bobbing lamps and ghostly newspaper-cuttings. It was a queer meal. There were no chairs, but



## The Isles of Thirst

the skipper pushed an empty packing-case towards me. He himself sat in the lower bunk and ate from the plate with his fingers. The contents of one of the beef-tins had been emptied into a tin slop-pail with the addition of a dozen chopped-up carrots. The very appearance of the slop-pail put me off. I had seen Taaroa washing her face in a vessel of very much the same size that afternoon, and the suggested idea was not encouraging. I also discovered now what the mess was our worthy cook had nearly given to the pigs. It was a dish of fried onions. In the midst of the feast, a gust of wind down the skylight blew the lamp out, and we had to hunt for the matches in darkness while the dishes jangled prettily and the contents of the slop-pail distributed themselves over the mate's corduroy trousers. For drink there was rum and water. I have since heard of the trick played on sea-sick midshipmen by canny superiors. When a man is in doubt offer him rum and water. I took a glass of Pedro's mixture. It was good enough for rum, especially Tahitian rum, but the result was surprising—terrifying. It seemed to me I must have parted with some of my interior arrangements. After an hour's agony on deck I crept into my bunk drenched with spray, wet, and miserable. Taaroa *vahine* came down

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

towards midnight, and her snuffling as she proceeded to disrobe made me feel like a criminal. On the following morning I awoke feeling a trifle better, though the wind had shifted apparently and the vessel was anything but steady. The Kanaka cook brought in a pailful of coffee and immersed the cups in it one by one. Taaroa *vahine* crept from her bunk and sat down on the floor with a bread-and-butter sandwich. The skipper was still snoring composedly. I tumbled out and went on deck. It was a lovely morning, but the sea was still rolling mountain high and the *Vaitipe's* rail was buried in foam. The hogs were grunting cheerfully in six inches of sea-water. I clawed hold of the cabin skylight to prevent myself falling and went astern. The first sight that met my gaze was the man at the wheel. He was asleep. The wheel was unguarded, and as each successive sea struck the rudder the fellies revolved prettily like the sails of a toy windmill. Apparently we had been drifting all night.

I flew downstairs and awoke the skipper. He was not in the least disconcerted. He shuffled on deck, grabbed the steersman by the collar and shook him. Then he blinked at the sun, pulled the wheel round a couple of turns and gave the course.

"Dam lazy fellow Kanaka-man, eh?" he said

## The Isles of Thirst

with a grin, "Kanaka-man no good" (with that air of *hauteur* common to the half-caste) "too much dam sleepy, eh?"

He sat down on the combing of the hatchway, rested his bare feet meditatively against the bulwarks, reached for a banana, peeled it, and commenced to eat it.

"Great Scott, man!" I gasped, as a hissing cloud of spray drenched me, "we've been drifting about all night! Do you mean to tell me you're not even going to take an observation?"

But Pedro didn't intend taking an observation, and for a good reason. His sextant was smashed, his book of logarithms gone the way of all such dull reading, while—

"That trembling vassal of the pole  
The feeling compass"—

was represented by a sixpenny brass toy about an inch in diameter, suitable for watch-chain use, and probably won in a raffle by one of Pedro's relatives in years past. We scudded along all day under jib and staysail. Taaroa appeared at eight bells with some coco-nuts, which she proceeded to chop open, flinging the white to the pigs and drinking the milk herself. I took Pedro to task about the course. It was a thankless job. Technical matters wearied him and he said so.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Presently, on the cook announcing dinner, he brightened up.

"I guess it'll be all right," he said philosophically.

This time I endured the beef and carrots without being ill, but thought it hardly advisable to tackle the rum. I came on deck towards eight. The night was pitch dark and windy. The waves, however, were no longer so violent, and I thought I might venture to stand in the prow. There was no trace of a moon. The sea was like a dark carpet, the broad patches of foam showing up palely in the light of the few stars. At times the *Vaitipe* would slide smoothly across an inky space of sea for a distance of twenty yards or so, then—whack!—down she went full force into the trough and the rebellious spray shot out from beneath her prow like wings.

I don't know at precisely what moment of my summing-up I arrived at the conclusion that we were sailing along without lamps. When I did it gave me a shock.

I found the skipper—sitting on the cabin table with a concertina, one of Taaroa's flower-wreaths framing his angular features. He was not discomposed in the least. He furbished up an old box of matches from the bread-locker, handed them to me and told me to light the lamps myself.

## The Isles of Thirst

I accepted the humour of the situation and obeyed meekly. The greens and reds had of course been wrongly placed, but I soon remedied that. On applying the match I found there was no oil in either of them. I sung out to Taaroa and she handed me up a tin of kerosene through the skylight. The lamps flared genially for one mortal hour, at the end of which period both went out, and I found on examining matters that the wicks needed renewing. There were no more wicks on board, however. Pedro set the lamp down on the cabin table and tried to prise the remnants of the wick out with a pin. Presently a roll of the boat sent the whole concern flying off the table and smashed the chimney to powder. We had only the green light to sail by now. I felt inclined to weep. Pedro guessed it was all right. I guessed it was not all right, and turned into my bunk in a bad humour.

Next morning as I crawled on deck in pyjamas for a spray bath I saw the blue triangle of an island notched on the starboard sea-rim. It was Mehetia, ninety odd miles from Papeete, the most easterly island of the Society group. My sluggish blood bounded again. Land at last! A release from bunk, beef, carrots, and Taaroa's *monoi*-scented top-hamper. Hurrah! Now, how about landing? What says the wily Pedro?

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Well—Pedro says on the whole he'd rather *not* land at Mehetia. There is only one settler on the island, it appears. He and Pedro quarrelled over a lady some months ago and they threatened to shoot each other on sight. Pedro doesn't fear white men, of course—don't care a damn for them in fact—still, he has reasons for believing the settler in question to be a man of his word. Besides, Pedro has an aged mother. No, he had rather give Mehetia a wide berth.

I got no glimpse of fresh coco-nuts that day. To make matters yet more pleasing the sea came in and pickled our supply of carrots. A jerky, puffy wind sprang up about 6 P.M. and brought the staysail rattling down about our ears. It threatened to be a dark night, and as the materials for repairing the damage were stowed away at the bottom of the hold among sacks of pine-apple, the skipper decided to lie on and off till morning. He was practising "My Coal-black Lady" on his concertina and the repose was necessary to his nerves. The vessel once more sludded down amicably into the trough of the sea, and from my bunk I heard Taaroa wheezing over the bulwarks.

Eight bells on the following morning found us speeding along at a dare-devil seven knots in a direction indicated by the skipper's pocket com-

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pass. I calculated that if a man might point a gun into the air at random and hit a bird, we might possibly hit Hikueru. The Pacific is a big place, and the prospect of unlimited roving in that wretched hen-coop, and perhaps the possibility of a lingering death from thirst was not congenial. But Pedro was quite content. He guessed it was all right and settled down to his mouth-organ with the air of a man who is master of his destiny.

Finally, on the seventh day out, a thin line of gray appeared in the east, which as the sun climbed up to noon gradually resolved itself into a double line of yellow and green, long, regular, and monotonous as a fiddle-string.

Land undoubtedly—but what land? There was no map on board that we could trust, and with that devil-may-care style of navigation the best of maps would be a Chinese puzzle. The wind dropped as we slid up alongside of the beach, which in its level regularity might have passed at a distance for a whitewashed fence shutting in a long garden. We had undoubtedly struck one of the Paumotu group, but which one? The beach was deserted as a grave. Pedro wasn't disconcerted. He dropped the rusty anchor overboard, tilted his hat over his eyes, meditated, cut a plug of tobacco, thrust it

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in his mouth, hitched up his suspenders, and retired downstairs for a siesta.

I felt unhappy. The uncertainty of latitude was eating into my soul, and in default of something better to do I determined to go ashore and reconnoitre. The *Vaitipe* was not exactly anchored. She was moored in some six feet of water at the brink of a coral-slope that fell away to infinity a yard behind our stern. The water was wonderfully calm, which was just as well, for had there been a breeze we should have gone to pieces like a castle of cards. I decided to make an effort. The water in the prow looked about two feet deep, also sea-water doesn't affect duck trousers. I clambered boldly down the bow-chains and found myself with an ignominious splash in four feet of lukewarm water, with my heels on a level with my head and my *papier-mâché* helmet bobbing cheerfully seawards. I captured it and struck out for the shore. I was conscious of looking a miserable object. My trousers clung to my shin-bones, my helmet was half melted, the coral sand was sticking to my wet boots—I felt as though I wanted to kill somebody.

Then, in the height of my misery, a voice accosted me from the shadow of the underbrush. There was a glimmer of blue, a flash of silver—



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it was a French official! At any other time the contrast he offered to the poetry of his surroundings might have jarred me, but in my then strait I felt more inclined to fall on his shoulder and weep.

“What is this island?” I managed to articulate, after I had slobbered mutely for some moments.

“Anaa, monsieur.”

Anaa, and we are bound for Hikuera! Merely a hundred and fifty miles out. Let me be thankful for small mercies and get ashore anyhow. We can do the reckoning-up part later.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ANAA—LIFE ON A CORAL ATOLL

“By the sands where sorrow has trodden  
The salt pools bitter and sterile—  
By the thundering reef and the low sea-wall  
And the channel of years.”

SEVEN days to do a hundred and sixty miles! And I suppose this is what a native skipper would call a splendid run. Done by guesswork too—without compass or chronometer. Had I allowed it, Pedro would doubtless have taken me over the entire Pacific the same way. Small wonder that parties of natives are occasionally picked up on the shores of nameless islands in a dying condition, drifted three or four thousand miles out of their course. They tell me families of Kanakas have been known to leave Tahiti to go to Bora-Bora, and eventually fetch up in Fiji or Hawaii. Words are words, and to an ungeographical reader this may not mean much. But what would you think of a man who started to go from London to Dover and landed by mistake in South America? Yet such is Kanaka seamanship.

## Anaa

Once on shore at Anaa my imperial spirit blazed. I determined I had had enough of romance. I would wait for the Union steamer and get wafted to Hikueru in civilised fashion. The skipper pleaded pathetically. My desertion cut him to the heart. "You friend-o'-mine," he said generously; "you no white man—you Kanaka-boy." The compliment hit me in a tender spot, but I was adamant. I would wait for the Union steamer. In the meantime there was a week to be whiled away, and there are many livelier places to while away a week in than the breezy sun-scorched Paumotus.

Anaa, taking it by and large, is by no means an uncreditable exponent of the group's characteristics. It is the nucleus of Paumotu island culture, and, together with Fakarava, the starting-point of all politico-religious learning. For the benefit of those who are fortunate enough to be unfamiliar with the practical construction of a coral atoll I will try and describe its leading features.

Imagine a ring of flat sand-patches thrown on the face of the sea, a ring whose component parts, some of them decent-sized islands, are separated by warm channels of sea-water—channels varying from twenty to two hundred yards in width, mostly impassable for large vessels, some of them even

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for boats. Imagine this girdle of sand, which may measure from ten to forty miles in diameter, filled with a vast lake of still, warm, oily water, so blue and limpid that it shames the sky itself. Imagine the edges of this lagoon fringed with palms, dust-discoloured cactus, bread-fruit, and straggling pandanus bushes. Imagine the long windy fields marked into occasional plantations by walls of crumbling coral and set off by the chalky gleam of a few settlers' houses. Not a hill, not a hollow—only the endless even layer of burning coral sand frescoed with the shadows of its nodding palms. For music the roar of the reef and the occasional z-z-z-zrp! of a bread-fruit ripping through dry leaves—such is Anaa. The reef runs right up to the base of the palms, a sort of shelving submarine beach damnable to tender feet and warranted to wreck the stoutest pair of sea-boots in less than no time. From the pyramidal beacon of stone topped by the fluttering tricolor clear out to where the rollers are crashing, a passage has been hewn in the coral. The landing, even in a civilised long-boat with European sailors, is exciting. There is no talk of rowing into the passage. You must shoot it. The boat dawdles about some twenty yards from the opening while the mate, gripping the steer-oar, watches his opportunity. Now then! Ready!

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The great comber gives the boat a heave that sends your heart to your mouth, and away you go in a mist of spray, scudding down on those deadly rocks at the speed of an express train. It is a ticklish moment. The passage is barely ten feet wide. Either you hit it off neatly and get landed in safety, or else the boat strikes the coral and goes miserably to pieces. But native pilots are clever at this sort of thing, and the ease with which they perform the difficult manœuvre is really wonderful.

The first glimpse of a Paumotu village is interesting enough. It soon palls, however. When you have seen one you have seen the lot. There are no roads, properly speaking. Roads would be a useless luxury. The ground is so level that were it not for the inlets a cart could move uninterruptedly round the whole ring. The main street is generally a neat broad avenue of powdered coral flanked by green lily plants or a double row of white boulders. There is a large whitewashed Protestant church, a portentous-looking graveyard shut in by walls of neatly sawn coral, a *farehau* or police station, and a school-house. The houses are the usual one-storey planter dwelling with a diminutive garden in front, painted wooden railings, a verandah, and a latticed outhouse. There are even fewer char-

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acteristic architectural traits than in Tahiti, the majority of settlers having adopted corrugated iron in preference to bamboo or pandanus. They tell me a goodly number of these hideous shanties are not paid for. I am glad of it. May they continue unpaid, and may the agonies of the vendor compensate for those of the tourist. To enjoy certain things one must be thoroughly heartless.

In spite of new-fangled suggestions, the reigning impression of desolation grows stronger each minute. You feel you are at the getting-off place of the world. There are pathetic reminders at every turn. In a glary acre of sand dotted with unsightly palm-stumps some one had tried to dig a well. The side-wall of brick had fallen in, the iron windlass was a heap of rust, a thrown pebble discovered a scuttering of crabs in the green slime of the bottom. In another place a settler (he turned out afterwards to be a German) had attempted a garden. He had marked the walks and planted the flowers, but the terrible sun had withered everything, and only bare rings of shells showed where the beds ought to have been. How far was the loved abode in the Fatherland whose memory this lonely man had tried to invoke?

For more than half the day not a soul is stir-



*A Trip on the Lagoon—Anaa.*





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ring. Nothing indicates that the houses are not deserted. In a marshy hollow you may possibly see an old woman, her face shrivelled like a dried apple, washing clothes in the coffee-coloured mud. Or you pass the schoolhouse where the boys are reading their lessons in monotonous chant, B—*a*—*bay*, B—*u*—*boo*, with side looks of shiftless curiosity which, after the livelier youth of Papeete, strike you unpleasantly. Then the vision passes and you are once more lost in the glare of the wood.

Oh, the ghastly solitude of those Paumotu forests! Not the solitude of the jungle or savannah, where each rotting log carries its freight of living creatures, nor yet that of the Mexican plateaux, whose sombre fir-copses are haunted by the shades of a million ancient kings—but the solitude of Nature clad in her forbidding armour of coral; offering nothing, promising nothing, fulfilling nothing—exulting in her poverty, flaunting her rag-panoply of palms at the brazen sky; a palace of dreadful day where loneliness reigns smiling and supreme.

And yet these nightmares of islands have their uses. The soil is valuable for copra-growing, and these apparently barren acres are jealously guarded by the Tahitian authorities.

Life in Anaa is Tahiti-and-water, or rather Tahiti without water. If there is any bathing

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to be done you must do it in the sea or in the lagoon. The latter is obviously the most practical. You soon grow to hate your bath. The water is lukewarm and does not refresh. The lagoon is naturally tideless, and the shores are lined with decaying sea-vermin. Sharks simply swarm. The latter inconvenience is usually got over by taking a dog with you. Sharks have a peculiar liking for dog-flesh, and should there chance to be one around the probabilities are poor Fido will be immolated first. A simple remedy, though a trifle rough on Fido.

Food in the Paumotus is uniformly abominable. People nervous on the score of ptomaine-poisoning would do well to give the archipelago a wide berth, as canned goods are the only kind of nourishment to be regularly depended on. A bunch of sickly bananas, a bag of oranges, a sack of potatoes are welcomed as a godsend. I remember my first day in Anaa, meeting a settler in the glare of noon and being dragged off to his house to taste of a newly imported delicacy. After much impressive burrowing and unwrapping the miracle was revealed. It was a green water-melon. It had come all the way from Mehetia. I had strength of mind to refuse a second slice. To me it was a little thing—to him a treasure passing the value of rubies.



*After the day's work—Paumotu Islands.*



## Life on a Coral Atoll

After your morning bath you can generally get some sort of a substitute for coffee. It is useless to try and cook it yourself. Better go to the store. Over the long deal counter, with its piles of tins and rows of pareos flapping on overhead strings, you can imbibe the mixture and give it any name you please. There will be a few honest fellows in corduroy breeches and top-boots, or stained ducks and Chinese pattens, to talk Paumotu politics and make it palatable.

When you fall back on the pure native cooking, you stand a better chance. Raw fish (*i.e.* fish cut into strips and pickled in oil or vinegar) has nothing revolting about it except the name; bread-fruit might pass for soapy potato with eyes shut, and pig—done in true island fashion in the warm ashes of a wood fire—is a thing to dream of. As for fish, green sea-crabs are none too bad, though a bit indigestible; turtle, on most of the islands, can be had periodically; young shark, to those who have not clomb to the fin-soup ideal, is a substitute for turbot, while the crowning native delicacy, sea-scorpion, is, though sometimes found in these waters, more properly a native of the Society and Cook groups. Lastly, I must not omit the dreaded scarlet sting-fish—a broad, wide-mouthed monster, with nasty slimy-looking tentacles about his gills, and a row of

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venomous spikes fringing his back. He is generally found basking in the sand, his poison apparatus conveniently protruding. Grilled over a slow fire he is excellent eating. Step on him, and three months in hospital will show you the uglier side of his qualities.

No—romantic incidents on these forgotten coral atolls are few and far between. The stillness, dulness, and general inanition of life is beyond the imaginings. Had Alexander Selkirk been wrecked on one of the Paumotus instead of Juan Fernandez he would simply have gone mad—and Robinson Crusoe would have been lost to the world. It would be difficult for any one to be thus wrecked nowadays.

Really uninhabited islands are rare, though indeed the population of the Paumotus varies enormously—from Anaa with its three hundred inhabitants to tiny museum-fragments like Taiaro or Tikei, with barely a settler to tread their burning sands. Romances connected with castaways are not unknown though. Some of them are, of course, lies pure and simple. Others, of a soberer tinge, have an ugly ring of truth in their composition. The heroes of the last of these were two young New Zealanders whom the Union Company contracted to set ashore at some dreadful and comparatively unknown island or other.

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They were to be landed and left for a fortnight, at the end of which time the steamer was to reappear and relieve them from their exile. The company carried out the first part of the contract, but the steamer forgot to return to the island, and for one awful year the two pioneers were left to their own devices. Stripped of the romantic facilities with which a novelist loves to surround his shipwrecked hero, their existence must have been a terrible one. For food the refuse of the sea, for drink the lukewarm coco-water. Great was the row when they were finally rescued. They returned to the mother country and promptly sued the company for damages, which were granted. The detailed history of their sufferings would make an interesting volume—but would it pay to write it? The lamp of truth glows feebly beside the arc-light of fiction, and the goddess herself looks, as Paumotu women do, best in her veil.

With all its monotony, a stay in Anaa leaves its own impression of poetry. The endless tramps through the sunny wood where the dried palm-branches crackle to the ripples on the blue tideless lagoon, the sleepy salutation of natives, the politics of panama-hatted long-shoremen, the moonlit rambles among the white stems, the night's rest on the pure hard sand when you

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wake with a start to see an army of crabs scurrying away from your supposed dead body—these are things not to be forgotten, and leave a mark on the senses not to be accounted for by any process of reasoning.

Anaa is not a good place to commit matrimony—respectable European matrimony—in. It would be a rash thing to condemn a white woman to live the life of a Paumotuan. There was a man once. But the story is worthy of detailed narration, and as it is persistently dinned into the ears of every one who sets foot in Anaa, may be treated as history, and so consigned to a fresh chapter.



## CHAPTER XIX

### CHALLONER'S ANGEL

THE ship must have been driven ashore during the night. Across the narrow band of coral the waves were pouring with a noise like thunder, and clearly visible in the white turmoil was a speck of black with the remnants of two masts sticking up like charred matches. Nearer by, something, the fragment of a torn sail, flapped on the water. The wreck was complete. On the sand lay two bodies, the wind playing idly with their dark clothes; one was a Kanaka, the other a European of sorts, with a grizzled beard and a sallow southern complexion. They were both dead, but Challoner was not the man to waste time sentimentalising. He returned to the village, and, within the hour, the beach was lined with jabbering, gesticulating natives.

It was early next morning before they succeeded in putting out to the ship. As the canoe rounded her stern they read—"The *Aglaia*, Valparaiso" in letters of white. An oily swell of water brought the canoe flush with the ship's

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gunwale and Challoner, Challoner *poparua* (long white man) as the people called him, sprang on board. Two bundles of rags were lashed to the mast. One stirred not, but the other, a small pale-faced creature, struggled and whimpered as the strange man bent over it.

There were various reasons why Nina Valverde's relations did not wish the child home again. Valverde had amassed a considerable fortune in the wool trade. He owned a house on the Monte Allegre, and drove a fine pair of horses. His subsequent marriage, at an advanced age, with a girl of lowly origin had been a thorn in their side. They were proud, as only Spaniards can be. Also they were poor and wanted money. Therefore they let the great deep swallow the child.

And in the long island of Anaa the natives gave up wondering. The girl was pretty and harmless, and Challoner *poparua* not a man to try conclusions with. Challoner did not complain of the burden. He had married a native wife and was making a decent income at copra and pearl-shell. His San Francisco agent asked no questions, and the Tahiti traders were indifferent. Nina was in her fifth year, growing up pretty and very wilful. She was rapidly be-

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coming islandised, had adopted native dress, and spoke the vernacular with the greatest ease—as only a child can whose tongue is hardly moulded to the jingle of an alien language. The night of agony on board the *Aglaia* had half-paralysed Nina's memory, and of her earlier life in Valparaiso only shadowy recollections remained. The bamboo stockades of the neighbouring planters shaped themselves into bars of light streaming through window-tatties, a square patch of sun in the clearing brought suggestions of the flower-worked nursery carpet; over Nina's bed, between the thin white curtains and the bands of moonlight there bent a tall pale woman not in the least like Vaerua—much handsomer and more pleasant-looking. Nina did not know what it meant, and in her then *entourage* there was no one to enlighten her.

Then came the day when Challoner's great idea struck him. On the back verandah Challoner's sickly wife was teaching Nina how to make *miti* (coco-nut sauce), and the sight of the girl's white fingers as they handled the weird shelly creatures of the sea made him think.

Was the girl fit for this life? She promised to be beautiful. Whither was her beauty likely to lead her in Anaa? Challoner's conscience pricked him. Under the rough skin of the

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trader lay the pure idealism of a thoroughly unselfish man. Nina must be sent away, if not to Valparaiso at least to some place where she could receive a decent education. Challoner sat down and, pipe in mouth, indited a letter to a friend in San Francisco, explaining things and asking advice.

The reply came in due course, and Nina who would much rather have stayed to play skittles on the beach with her Kanaka friends, was shipped off to the Frisco convent of San Geronimo to be educated into something vaguely resembling a European miss in distant Beretania. The novelty of her surroundings at first jarred on the child. She was seven years old and full of fun. She missed her juvenile companions and the tumbling waves of Anaa. The Sunday's dead-march in the Gardens was no substitute for the barefooted scampers over the white sands with the music of the combers in her ears, and the salt breath of the ocean in her nostrils. The Sisters were dull and constrained. Indeed Nina was a puzzle to them at first. The girl was evidently a savage—yet underneath all were the instincts and manners of a lady.

Time wore on, and Nina's two years in Anaa died a natural death. As they did so, her still earlier recollections came back. The effect of

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light between green blinds and the tall motherly woman with the pale face and crucifix grew plainer each day. Echoing words caught her ear, and the sisters wonderingly interpreted their meaning. Nina began to look on this new life in the convent as a revival of the old dimly remembered period of childhood in Valparaiso, and as the two periods joined hands, the faint intermediate episode on the sands of Anaa got crushed out and destroyed.

But on that low flat ring of coral, under the fire of that remorseless iron roof with the dry odour of copra and the clink of the sorted shell echoing in his ears, Challoner was waiting.

He too saw possibilities in the dim-lit future. Once a month a letter used to come bearing the Frisco postmark and telling him of Nina's progress, of the exercises she was practising on the piano, of the sisters' difficulties in making her keep her hair combed, of her proficiency in Spanish and German. Then Challoner's big heart would swell to bursting and he would bless that awful day of the wreck with the fervour of a man who sees Paradise before him. The cheque came regularly as clockwork. Challoner's business was increasing. He had taken a contract for pearl-shell from a Tahitian firm and was

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master of a thirty-ton schooner. He was the most popular man in the island. The plain four-roomed shanty had become a neat villa with hedges of well-groomed coffee bushes and a tall flagstaff topping the lawn between flower-beds. Challoner had a piano brought from Auckland. It arrived, at last, in a native schooner. The sea had done its work on the strings, and by the time it came to be housed in Challoner's parlour between the gaudily framed prints and crossed paddles from Makatea, it was hopelessly out of tune. But Challoner's ear was not delicate, and he was delighted. Had he been able he would have gone to Frisco himself to visit Nina, but he was a busy man and he knew that in Anaa there were men only too ready to supplant him should he permit himself to play truant.

Vaerua, ailing for some time past, suddenly sickened and died. Domestic interests removed, Challoner might have gone the way of nine out of ten of his associates and degenerated to the level of an ordinary drunken beach-comber—but the thought of his angel waiting across four thousand miles of sea restrained him and he kept himself holy for her sake.

Nina, indeed, was by this time a prize well worth the winning. The Sisters had by no means originally intended to launch the girl in Frisco

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society, but Nina had made friends among her classmates, and invitations came as a matter of course. Her piano-playing was the talk of the quarter, and in learning of all sorts she was the model held up to the admiration of the rest of the pupils. Already the Sisters were displeased at the prospect of losing her, and as the days wore on their displeasure quickened to a poignant anxiety.

But Challoner was only going to wait a year longer. The period sped quickly, the fatal letter came. Nina, sobbing bitterly, was escorted down to the crowded wharf and ensconced in the stuffy cabin of a sailing-ship bound for Papeete. "Remember," said the eldest Sister, a tall matronly-looking woman, strikingly like the dream-woman of Nina's earliest infancy, "if your new home disappoints you, *Niña mia*, you always have a home with us." The words sank deeply into the girl's heart, and during that long awful journey she treasured them as one treasures gold.

Challoner was counting the days with feverish interest. He had arranged everything. Nina was to be lodged at the house of a lady friend, a half-caste missionary's wife. They were to take the first ship to Papeete, get married, and spend their honeymoon in the Society Islands. Then they were to return to Anaa and reign like

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king and queen. He was in the shed among the pearl-shell when the schooner was sighted, and hurried off home to change his things, his heart going like a steam-hammer.

The vessel swept round majestically, clearly visible through the stems of the coco-trees. There was a flash of white in the gangway, and Nina, as the boat put her ashore, saw in the blinding light a cluster of dirty natives threading their way through the piles of packing-cases to receive her. Foremost of all was a big man in corduroys who cried and crushed her fingers in his huge palm. The glare was terrific, and her delicate lace sunshade in no way protected her. She allowed herself to be escorted to Challoner's house, and there in that glowing atmosphere, under the fishing-trophies and cheap gaudy prints, her stoicism forsook her and she burst into shameful tears!

The skipper of the *Aurora* was on Challoner's verandah as Nina was ushered in. He knew what the trouble was and sized it up epigrammatically, with language that need not be published. "I'd make a blame good scoot for it if I were in her shoes, blame me if I wouldn't," was his reiterated conclusion, and the foc'sle hands grinned assent.

The *Aurora* was to sail in three days' time. Challoner was glowing. His plans about his



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wedding had changed. There was no need to go to Papeete. The fine church had just been completed at Anaa. They could be married there and spend their honeymoon in Challoner's own schooner. His life was tied up with the natives of the Paumotus and he dreamed no evil.

But—on the fateful evening before the sailing of the *Aurora*, as the skipper was drinking with the boys in the saloon, the Kanaka steward called him aside and conducted him to where, in a secluded corner of the deck, a tall pale girl fell on her knees and sobbed out a petition.

Challoner found the note next day. It was half obliterated with tear-splotches and smudged in a weak, girlish hand; but it made the strong man stagger as though he were shot. What was he to do? As the house reeled round him a strange murderous idea occurred to him. He thought of his schooner lying there in the lagoon. What if he were to chase after the *Aurora*, board her, and—and—bring Nina to reckoning?

Something told him it would be vain madness. He paced terribly up and down the beach till sunset. Once a native accosted him, but Challoner broke the man's jaw and he fled howling. Then a new idea seemed to strike him. He returned to the village and knocked at the

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door of the solitary storekeeper. Failing an answer he kicked open the door with his foot. "Bring out the liquor and the glasses," he said to the terrified half-caste—"I'm going to raise Hell!"

He did.

But Challoner did not go to the bad. After a month's madness he settled down once more to the life of a planter, and once again became loved of the natives. Eventually he left Anaa and settled in Papeete, where he has an interest in several vanilla farms and is one of the most honoured members of parliament Tahiti boasts. But he doesn't believe in prohibition. "It don't seem to act in the United States," he says; "why should you want it to fail in the islands?"

## CHAPTER XX

### MAKEMO—SURF-RIDING—SHARKS

THE ubiquitous *Croix du Sud* arrived in due course. I was glad to see her. I said a pathetic farewell to my *gendarme* friend, went on board, and climbed into my bunk. I needed a rest, a genuine Christian one, after that week on mats and sand, and when the screw commenced to jog my pillow an hour later, I sternly refused to come on deck and bid Anaa a last farewell.

Variety, says some barbarian wise man, is the spice of life—and in the Paumotus there is no variety. It is life without spice, a glary routine of sand and coral, flat to the taste as a backwoods pancake. Thus topples to earth another romance of mine, the romance of a "coral island" existence. What complex fits of thrill I have wasted over that heartless fraud! How imperfect is a school education and how truly awful the ideas it instils. The principal sinner in my case was Ballantyne. He taught me to look on coral islands as paradises. I shall never forgive him. To make matters still more offensive, we are urged to admire and applaud the silly polyp who erects

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these nightmares, and to emulate him if possible! It is incredible how many tons of sentiment the civilised world has wasted over the coral polyp and his work. If human suffering, boredom, and madness count for anything in the scale of crime, the coral polyp is the meanest, the most hypocritical, the most injudiciously lionised criminal extant.

Next morning I got a practical illustration of the dangers of the archipelago. Captain Pond called me on the bridge, and, pointing ahead over the bows—"Do you see anything there?" he said.

I strained my eyes in vain. Yet we were within four miles of land. Ten minutes later two tiny dots of palm dipped up from the blue. They were the forerunners of the island of Makemo—one of the few islands hereabouts that possesses a passage deep enough to admit large steamers. The current in the pass was very violent, and it seemed to me that with all the efforts of the machinery we were making little or no progress. We got ashore towards eight, however, inside the lagoon, where a goodly flotilla of skiffs and outrigger canoes were drawn up to receive us.

I had a letter to one of the residents, a man named Elson, whose house lay some two miles from the inlet, and as I walked I had time to take stock of things in superficial tourist fashion.

Makemo—as a centre of culture—is a big step

## Makemo

behind Anaa. The population is very variable, and just then (February) the majority, I was told, were absent in Hikueru for the pearl-fisheries. There was the usual church with its home-made coloured windows and mildewed green bell, the level avenue flanked by lilies, the cemetery, and the scurrying army of hogs. A curious custom prevails here in connection with the dead. Among the white slabs marking the graves I repeatedly noticed stray piles of bedding, blankets, and rugs. They were the sleeping-places of natives, who by spending a night among the tombs hope to obtain the privilege of communing with the dear departed. A gruesome custom and one which the missionaries are labouring to discourage.

There was goodly array of Makemo youth frolicking in the water, some surf-swimming on boards, others merely dabbling. By rights these ingenuous youngsters ought to have been at school, but I suppose it was a holiday, or perhaps school hours are arbitrary in the Paumotus. Surf-swimming is an exhilarating pastime and amusing to watch. The urchins swam out to where the combers were tossing their manes, bestrided their boards and got carried home shrieking at a speed which Perseus in the sandals of Hermes might have envied. I don't know whether the sport is accompanied by much

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

danger. It looked horribly dangerous to me. On a flat beach cushioned with fine sand *cela va bien*. A tumble in the mud is the worst to be anticipated. But on the iron-bound coast of Makemo it is another affair altogether. Let one of those youngsters slip or miscalculate his distance by a few yards and his skull would be smashed like an egg. I suppose the dear things knew what they were at, however, for the sport went on hour after hour in a way that might have struck despair to the heart of a Makemo life-insurance company, if there was one.

Just then, five minutes or so after I had finished admiring the picture of brown limbs flashing in creamy surf, came one of those little *rencontres* which illustrate the fatalistic island character so thoroughly. On a level stretch of sand and coral innocent of waves a party of men were busy with baskets and string. On my asking what they were doing, I was told "fishing for sharks!" This turned out to be actually the case, for the sharks in Makemo are a great deal harder up for food than those in Tahiti and bite readily at anything.

"Even at schoolboys," I suggested.

"Sometimes," was the tranquil reply.

I crossed the belt of palms to the lagoon. Here more fishing was going on, though of a more inoffensive description. Two men came

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staggering in under the weight of a load of something resembling salmon, though of course it wasn't salmon and more resembled the *ulua* of the Sandwich Islanders.

In the wood alongside were more curiosities. Truants picking coco-nuts—stealing them I presume—for one could hardly admit to oneself that these brown monkeys with straw satchels on their backs were the owners of plantations. Shades of Surrey orchards! I wonder whether these mother's joys will get as soundly birched as we did when——

But never mind. I am glad I met those boys. It is these little touches of home-made poetry that move one's heart in a foreign land.

Elson's house was a remarkably handsome type of villa—for Makemo. It was built of coral, with inside partitions of varnished wood, walls obliterated under a load of pictures and bric-a-brac, and real muslin mosquito-curtains protecting the bed. He entertained me royally—turtle's fins and baked beans—and spun yarn after yarn. The plates were removed and coffee and cigars took their place. The conversation here turned on navigation, and I called Elson's attention to the difficulty the *Croix du Sud* had experienced getting into the pass. He expressed no surprise.

"It's a devil of a place," he said simply; "runs like a mill-race at the ebb, and whirls like

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ten thousand devils at the flood. There's not another like it in the group."

I said I should hope not, or words to that effect. My companion puffed solemnly. "How would you like to try and swim it?" he said lazily.

I stared. The bare idea seemed preposterous. Elson rose and took off a bracket the photo of a girl, still young, framed in a curious kind of rough leather frame studded with copper nails. In the Paumotus as elsewhere, most Jacks have their Jill.

"Your wife?" I said.

He nodded. "Help yourself to the rum. I'll tell you a yarn of a rather awful kind if you'll promise not to laugh. It concerns the girl too. Ariitea her name is. Do you know what that frame's made of?"

"It looks like shark-skin," I said tentatively.

"It *is* shark-skin," was the reply. "Do you know what a *patui* is?"

I nodded. The rambling chatter of Papeete fishermen had made me acquainted, fortunately only theoretically, with those terrible fish.

"We have 'em here at times. Great brutes that'd swallow you or me as easily as a bear swallows a penny bun. You're smoking nothing."

"I don't care about smoking—it distracts me," I said eagerly; "tell us the yarn."

Elson filled his pipe, lit it, arranged himself in his chair and spoke as follows.





*A Makemo Schoolboy's Holiday.*



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE WHITE DEVIL OF MAKEMO

IT was about a month after my landing here that I met Ariitea. She was the daughter of one of the chiefs in Tetuaranga (that's the village yonder)—a sort of quarter-white blackguard, Portugee on his father's side and African Portugee at that. He's dead now, and a good job too. A fearful old drunkard he was, and very nasty to cross in liquor.

I don't quite know myself how it happened. I didn't give a snap for these coloured women as a general thing, but Ariitea was by long odds the best-looking one I had come across till then, and I fell in love then and there.

It was my first and only love affair, and it clean bowled me over. I met her old skinflint of a father in the matter of price, but before I could scrape the money together there landed at Tetuaranga (that's the village yonder) one of the d—dest, lankiest, blackest-eyed half-castes you ever saw. Lakin his name was. He had been purser to some big trading vessel, but had got

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

himself cashiered for dishonesty, and had hit on the idea of settling in the Paumotus and playing at trader.

I'd never known what jealousy was before, but I got to know it then. Lakin had the advantage of me, for he knew the lingo, and these girls won't look at a white man when there's a chance of a fellow who's got a dash of the tar-brush. The first time he saw Ariitea he ogled her in a way that made me want to kick him—but it was best to stand well with the natives, and I had to restrain myself. I met the fellow next day though, and gave him a piece of my mind.

“It's me you have to reckon with, my boy,” I said, “not with that old blackguard yonder. The girl's mine, and, by G—, if I find you or any other son of a gun monkeying round I'll wring your neck!”

He took it gamely. Grinned and showed his teeth—fine teeth they were—and apologised. But my blood was up, and I saw he'd twigged all right.

Next day as I was bossing some chaps cleaning shell a messenger came from the old man Mahinui. A *patui* had carried off one of his men in the pass—carried him clean off while he was stringing his nets—and he wanted my help in killing the brute. Perhaps you know the nature of these devils.

## The White Devil of Makemo

They're the man-eating tigers of the ocean. When a *patui* kills a man he'll hang around the spot and carry off another and another, regular as clockwork, till he gets killed himself.

I wasn't best pleased at the job, for I'd other things on hand just then, but Ariitea's dad had to be humoured, and I went. The natives had been baiting their silly hooks, and towing dead pigs about all the afternoon. I didn't care about net-stringing, so by way of making a show I got a Sharp's rifle (I believe it was the only one in the island), and set off with a boy in the biggest and solidest canoe I could find. It was just possible the brute might come to the surface, and I might get a shot at him. It wasn't scientific fishing, but it was white-man cleverness, and enough to amuse Mahinui.

I didn't expect the shark would turn up, but things panned out differently. The sun was terrific, and I was dozing contentedly in the stern of the canoe. The boy was on the look-out. It must have been about half-past four in the afternoon. Presently the youngster grabbed his paddle and gave a gasp—I saw about a yard under the surface the biggest monster I've ever seen in my life. He must have measured full twenty feet from nose to tail, and as he cut through the water to seize the bait he threw out a phosphorescent

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light like a ghost. I cocked my rifle and fired. I don't think I hit him, though I saw the flaps of his great tail, and felt the effect by the rocks of the canoe. Anyway I couldn't be sure. He vanished like a streak of lightning. "Row out into the middle," says I to the boy; "maybe we'll get another shot."

The youngster was in the bluest of funks, and I don't blame him much either, for that fish could have taken boat and all like a pill. Presently, as we were settling down to a new spell of waiting, comes a yelling from the village opposite.

"White devil?" said I lazily.

"Canoes," said the youngster—"canoes from Tetuaranga."

"Has the whole beach gone off its onion?" said I, for the natives on shore were yelling like demons; "row in, sonny, and see what's the matter."

It was time to think of getting ashore anyhow. The wind was getting up, and the sea was coming in in neat little lines of white, as the sea always does when she means business. Some one was waiting on the beach. It was the half-caste, and I could see by his eyes that he was in a great state of excitement.

"Is that you, Elson?" he says, with the natural imbecility of the Kanaka, "for God's

## The White Devil of Makemo

sake listen, man! There's trouble over yonder.' Old Mahinui, your girl's father, has knifed a man—knifed him dead!"

"Well, what's that to you?" said I airily, for I was still smarting over the cool way he'd taken my challenge of the day before.

"Not much, but a good deal to *you*," he says quietly; "the dead man's a chief's son and—why, man, *she'll be murdered this very night!*"

He might have said less. I understood in a flash. "She'll have to be got out of this," said I, speaking half to myself; "and there isn't a ship nearer than Fakarava."

"There's my schooner," says he quickly; "you can have that, if she's any use to you."

"Bless you," said I, wringing his hand, "you're white all over."

Just then a gust of wind carried his hat away. I saw the palms of the spit bend double, and there was an angry roar from the sea as the squall struck. It was a nasty blow, and I knew we should have it dark as pitch in a few moments.

We got in the canoe and tried to pole her off. Just as we thought her fairly started a comber struck us broadside on; she heeled, and her outrigger snapped like a match. We stood up to our waist in hissing water, looking at each other like a pair of fools.

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"The boat's broke," said Lakin stupidly, "what in hell are we going to do now?"

"Swim for it," said I savagely, kicking my boots on the sand. Lakin gave one look, to see if I was in earnest, then ran one hand up to the top button of his coat. "I'll go with you," said he defiantly.

The madness of jealousy was between us. I looked at the pass, where the combers were running like fury, and an idea struck me that made me go cold all over. But I gave it no time.

"Come on!" I shouted, gripping his shoulder and wringing it; "it's between you and me, my lad. The man who reaches her first takes her and keeps her. One of us'll be bound to get across *unless the patui gets us both!*"

I don't think till that moment he had realised what was before him; anyway, in the murky light, I saw his face turn ashy. In a second we were both in the water swimming like madmen to where the lights of the village showed above the line of foam.

The sea buffeted us like an army of demons. I lost sight of Lakin after the first fifty yards or so, and as I turned to look back a wave hit me in the face and blinded me. Then there came the idea of the other danger, and the horror of



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it gave me desperate courage. I threw myself forward, and swam blindly for the landing.

I might have been about half-way across when, as I topped one of the combers, right in front of me, through the slant of a wave, I saw a phosphorescent streak of green—it was the *patui*!

I think for one moment breath left my lungs. Then common sense came back, and I did the only thing possible at such a crisis. I drew in a big supply of air, opened my eyes, and dived head foremost under the surface. The place was full of lights—crabs crouching in their holes and sparkles of fire from passing fish. But the streak of green had vanished, and presently I rose to the surface again. The wind seemed more violent than before, and there was a shrieking of gulls in the blackness overhead. It struck me they were screaming our requiem.

Then an awful thing happened. From the dark rim of the palms, between two flying clouds, stabbed a blood-red spear of sunlight, and right in the heart of the glare, in a whirl of angry water, a pair of white arms rose to the light. It was the half-caste, and on his face was written terror beyond the power of imagining. One second he hung there between the trough of the wave and the flying scuds, then a yell came from his lips—

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a yell that froze the blood in my veins—and he sank gurgling in a circle of foam.

I don't remember what happened next quite. The lights ahead of me were dancing a drunken reel. I might have been swimming back to the point I started from for all I knew. Then, as I gave myself up for lost, my knee struck something hard—I was on the rocks, and safe.

He paused, filled himself out a stiff nobbler of rum and drank it at a gulp.

“And Ariitea?” I suggested.

“Well—I guess that's about the whole of the yarn,” he replied, with affected indifference. “No, it isn't though, quite. I got her away in the boat—his boat—and steered for Fakarava. The blackguards had rifled the house and tried to fire it, but the rain came down and it wouldn't burn. We had a job getting her off. The wind was blowing right square into the lagoon, and as we yawed in the pass something came floating by on the water—something that made me turn sick. Ariitea had her elbows on the gun'le and was looking at the sea. I took her in my arms, just in time, and lifted her down into the cabin. There wasn't much to be got by shocking the girl, and—there wasn't enough of the thing to require burial. That's the whole story. Now you

## The White Devil of Makemo

know why that picture there's framed in shark-skin."

There was a step outside. The door opened and a girl with a heavy basket of pine-apples on her arm staggered into the room. It was Ariitea. With the raindrops coursing down her cheeks and the wet strands of hair clinging to her forehead, she hardly looked a being for whose sake a man would risk his life. When she saw me fingering her portrait she smiled. Then, overcome with bashfulness, she retired to an inner room and closed the door.

"That's the way with 'em," said Elson philosophically; "she saw you fingering the frame and twigged what we had been talking about. I believe she really was a bit sweet on the chap. If you're game now we might go down to the ship and polish off those bags of shell. It's my only chance for a month of real Christian work, and I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

## CHAPTER XXII

### HIKUERU AND THE PEARL-FISHERY

“Haere rii au i Hikueru é  
E foito rii au i te reni é.”

—*Kanaka Love-song.*

ON reaching the *Croix du Sud* we found a brand-new and interesting collection of natives in possession of the decks. A band of straw-hatted, flower-girdled wisdom was going to Hikueru—to speculate. About two-thirds of the number belonged to the softer sex, and among the latter were several whom I wickedly suspected of having figured in some Papeete hoola a month back.

The way in which one recognises the same faces over and over again in the Pacific is marvellous. How do the darlings get about? It is surely only in Tahiti that you find a young miss of fifteen who *ought* to be at school doing sums, galivanting about on the briny a few thousand miles from her home, with a plank between her preciousness and eternity, and the tender mercies of a Union Company bo'sn for emotional mainstay. Morality, your name is latitude.

Elson said pathetic farewell to me in the gray

## Hikueru and the Pearl-Fishery

dawn, and the *Croix du Sud* steamed meekly out through that terrible pass fifteen minutes later. My dreams that night were a medley of clashing shark-jaws, hissing acres of foam, spectral fringes of palm, and brown limbs frothing in voluptuous dance—the latter image being probably conjured from the Silent by the vocal efforts of the stranger vahines in the foc'sle. Then—sudden as the splash of a whale's flukes—some one shouted my name, and I awoke to learn that Hikueru was in sight. Like the rest of the Paumotus, the approach offers nothing striking—a long hot line of palms and pandanus against which the white shanties of the settlers loom up like pearls in a necklace of emerald. This is poetry—but the dusty reality obliterates it from the first second of your landing. Hikueru, as we have already hinted, plays a rôle of considerable importance among the islands of the Eastern Pacific, its dusty, shadeless acres being the assembling-ground and nucleus of no inconsiderable fraction of South Sea wealth. The actual output of the island in shell for this last season is stated at some \$200,000 American money; and should the more modern mechanical improvements (foolishly abandoned some time ago) be re-introduced into the diving operations, it is probable that even a larger figure may be reached.

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Landing on the island is a nasty ordeal in all weathers. As usual, there is no species of anchorage. Even boats of light draught generally find it impossible to approach within fifty yards of dry land. Of late years efforts have been made to blast a passage up the reef to enable burdens to be deposited ashore without further parley, but the scheme is still in abeyance, and something more than the staggering efforts of the French Government will be needed to push it to a successful issue. As it is, the boat comes to a standstill in some two feet of water, and if you object to wading across the intervening knife-edges of coral—quite a reasonable objection by the way—you can ride ashore pickaback on the shoulders of a Kanaka. Here, if you are still suffering from the more picturesque variety of island-fever, you will get a bit of a shock. Hikueru presents an astonishingly, almost disagreeably “new” appearance. The place is choked with corrugated iron sheds, packing-cases, advertisements—all the signs of a busy, romance-murdering civilisation. The whole landscape looks impertinently young. The very coco-trees are young, and offer no sort of shelter from the sun. The population too is a wonderful jumble. Here a brawny half-caste looks out pipe in mouth from among the piled-up soap bars of his store.

## Hikueru and the Pearl-Fishery

A Tahitian vahine—pale mauve empire gown and perfume of tuberose all complete—passes you smiling. A couple of coal-black Fijians are arguing under the waving paper scrolls of a Chinaman's. A group of tattooed Marquesans are squatting in the sun playing dice with the proceeds of yesterday's diving. Farther on a tall Easter-islander, with eyes of sloe and pale-coppery complexion, leans pensively against a palm bole. All the racial panorama of the Pacific, from Rarotonga to Rapa-nui, is being trotted out for your inspection.

A walk of ten minutes or so brings us to the lagoon. It is a vast sheet of emerald water deluged in a glare which the fleet of white-painted yachts and fishing smacks don't help to mitigate by any means. Woe to the man who is unprovided with smoked glasses! The living fire will eat into his brain and drive him distracted. To gaze on Hikueru lagoon with the naked eye is the most real, the most horrible of tortures.

And now we are in the very centre of operations, and the one absorbing topic is beginning to din itself into our ears. Shell—shell—shell. Through the warm shallows men are wading ashore with bags and baskets of the precious merchandise. From under the glowing roof of

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

a warehouse behind comes the chink of hammers. A party of Kanakas are cleaning shell, and packing it in cases for export. Incidentally you learn that the price of shell is £50 a ton.

When you are tired of the never-ending music of long-shore gossip you can go and watch the diving operations for yourself. Out on the smooth expanse a score of tiny dots are languidly cruising. We will board the cutter *Turia* and follow one of them up. Hikueru diving is performed without the very faintest excuse in the shape of dress or helmet. Naked as a marble Faun the Hikueran descends to rob the lagoon of its treasures and—a mere professional detail—brave the sharks.

At a mile or so from land a tiny pink dot, a half-submerged island of coral, appears in the green like an oasis. The sides and crevices of this singular excrescence are choked with pearl-shell. There are several canoes bobbing about. In the nearest one two men are sitting stark naked. The sun is nearly vertical, and to a European understanding it seems a miracle how they avoid shrivelling up like spiders on a hot shovel. Our mentor, the skipper of the *Turia*, pours forth a volley of fluent Polynesian. Will they dive for the gentleman with the camera? They will. Had we been among the Maoris of New Zealand or the culture-mildewed Sandwich



## Hikueru and the Pearl-Fishery

islanders they might have suggested being paid first, but here all is lovely. The elder of the two men sits for a few seconds gasping in the bows while he takes breath. Then he rises to his feet and—plump!—over he goes in a graceful curve. The lagoon at this point is about sixty feet deep. “Count,” says our mentor, and we pull out our stop-watches. Sixty seconds (a good dive that), seventy, eighty—the man must have the wind of a grampus—ninety, a hundred, a hundred and ten. He’s drowned. No he isn’t either, for here he comes puffing and sneezing, and in his hand is something black with a trailing fringe of seaweed. He throws it in the boat and the game continues.

A hundred and ten seconds. A very fair dive, but not the record by any means. Men have been known in Hikueru to remain under water for *three minutes and a half!* A painful profession? Well, it is a well-paid one too. Shell of the best quality and size is worth, in Hikueru, some two and a half Chile dollars (about five shillings) per kilo. An enterprising diver can make his three to four pounds a day while the season lasts. Luck has, of course, a certain amount to do with it, for if he should happen to strike a barren region the shell-diver may have his long spell of suffocation for nothing. For this reason no pains are spared to ascertain the nature

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of the bottom of the lagoon before diving is resorted to. Various means have been tried, but the simplest and most interesting of all is the water-glass. In form it is merely an elongated tube of wood with a pane of glass let into one end. The protecting walls check the ripples, and you look down on the sea-bottom as though you were gazing vertically into an immense aquarium. The first sight of a coral grove with alternating layers of sand and pearl-shell is an event not to be forgotten. In these latitudes the waters are so clear that a bed of sand can be distinguished without difficulty at twenty fathoms. The coral bottom affects all manner of strange forms. In some places the rocks are gnarled like the buried stumps of venerable trees, in others the white structure imitates the marble lacework of a cathedral—the whole set off by swarms of tiny blue fish and the rosy hanging drapery of sea-weed. The waters of the lagoon are warm all over, and in places actually hot—so if you dream of a refreshing bath you are apt to be disappointed. In the interim you can get back on shore, and while a trader entertains you with rum and tobacco on his verandah you can consign to your notebook some of the more sober facts connected with this wonderful shell industry.

Hikueru produces the finest quality of black-



*Pearl-diving in Hikueru.*



## Hikueru and the Pearl-Fishery

edged shells known to the Pacific. The productive powers of its lagoon have been more than doubled within the last fifteen years, thanks to the use of diving-dresses and improved machinery from 1885-92. This method of obtaining shell (which has since been unwisely checked by the Government) was in reality a great boon to the oyster-beds. The fully dressed diver brought up shells from depths which the naked diver never could hope to reach, with the result that the ova of those shells on being scooped out in the boat and thrown back into the water was carried by the action of the wind and waves all over the lagoon, thus forming new beds of shell in the shallower parts instead of remaining inert in the deeper portions and forming unhealthy conglomerates of shell which harboured the borer.

Inasmuch as the ova of shells, on being emitted from the parent oyster, never rises but always sinks, it is clear that no bed of shell in deep water can possibly hope to fructify shallower portions of the lagoon—hence the benefits accruing from the use of the diving-dress.

The superior productive power of Hikueru, as compared with the rest of the islands concerned in the industry, probably also lies in the fact that there being absolutely no passage through the reef to the outer ocean there is a total absence of

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

the different species of fish which prey on the ova of the young oyster. Also it seems probable that there is something in the character of the Hikueru lagoon bottom which renders it especially suited to the growth of the pearl-oyster, for nowhere in the world does such a small area of sea produce such a weight of shell.

It must not be forgotten that a good deal of credit is due to the French Government for the efforts they have made to increase and conserve shell production by "closing" each island in rotation, thus allowing the diving grounds a rest of from two to three years between operations; though they have undoubtedly been ill advised in stopping the use of diving-dresses, and will certainly have to allow them again or see the shell grounds depleted for want of seed, so to speak.

The other islands of the Tuamotu group producing in less quantity shells as good as Hikueru are Raroia, Marokau, Takume, Takapoto, Marutea. The Gambier Islands also produce an inferior quality of shell, less bright in colour, more or less covered with lime on the back, thicker and often misshapen.

With these parting pages of information, for which I duly apologise to the reader, we take leave of Hikueru—the only really working island of the Pacific—and hie us to the idle but lovely Marquesas.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### HIVAOA—MISSIONARIES—THE CRUCIFIXION OF CRADOCK

“Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers  
At sunset over the love-lit lands.”

THE Marquesas are not coral islands, thank Heaven. They are a big collection of volcanic peaks that fall into the ocean some twelve degrees from the equator, groaning under an Atlas-burden of tropical verdure—lofty enough and arrogant enough to check even the rush of those terrible Pacific combers and fling them back with shame and triumphant mockery.

But the sea doesn't suffer in silence by any means. Across four thousand miles of sea those combers have been rolling in steady procession, and now the rocks bid them halt. What happens? Simply a display of watery fireworks that defies description. The whole easterly coast of the islands may be said to be walled in by an army of spray fountains. Every variety of explosion is represented—from the thundering globe of smoke to the shrieking spurt that looks as though it came from the nozzle of a high-pressure fire-

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

engine. Even from the sedate deck of the *Croix* the spectacle is impressive. View it from the shore—craning yourself perilously among the clinging lantana right over that howling wilderness of mist crossed by flying rainbows—well, ask some one else to describe it. I am unequal to the task.

Then, even while one shivers in awe the roar diminishes—the tall capes slide away like views in a diorama—and Hivaoa, frowning and tremendous, appears behind the cliffs of outlying islands, dwarfing them as Ossa might Pelion. One solitary mountain (Mount Temeti, 4000 feet) juts forward into the sea. Beyond come range after range of battlemented *arêtes*, the low morning sun pricking out their serried ribs like the spears of an advancing army. We are in Atuana Bay. So deep is the flood of verdure that although a populous village lies hidden in the shadow of the mountains, no sign of human habitation is visible. A few isolated landmarks are pointed out. A tiny villa crowning a slope of pandanus is, or rather was, the dwelling-place of Captain Hart, whose solitary exploit (that of shooting a native) becomes almost terrible by repetition. On a low promontory looms a diminutive crucifix where some absent-minded sailor fell and broke his neck on the cliff below. There is a solitary wooden



## Hivaoa

shed chartered by the ever-present "D & E," and a suggestion of cantering horsemen on the winding red road beyond. These are really the Marquesas.

A funny history, too, these islands have had—a history punctuated with the morbid dilettantics of Spanish officialdom and wreathed with haloes of savage mystery—deeds of barbarism that have shuddered their way to the hearts of Europe in chapters of delirious sailor-jargon.

But the missionaries have changed all that. Between the quondam cannibal with his poisoned arrows and the amiable, mild, modern version with his bowl of *miti* and his steel-tipped fish-spear lies a wide gulf, and to the missionaries belongs the credit of having bridged it. You will have ample opportunity to philosophise over the advantages the new *régime* has to offer. It is passing pleasant to meet in the gloom of those fragrant woods a native armed to the teeth and tattooed from head to heel with cabalistic scroll-work—it is pleasant to note that instead of getting ready to scalp you, you see his honest face broaden in a grin as he blurts out "*Ka-oha*" (the substitute for *iorana*) with a geniality testifying to his regard and pacific intentions alike. It is nice to loll at your ease on the bank of some sunny river and know that the almond-coloured

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ladies who come paddling up through the clumps of tiaré are looking on your person—well, not as an intended *bon-bouche*—but in gentler, if less platonic fashion. Yes, indeed; once you have ozonised in graceful Hivaoa you will be obliged to confess to many good points about the workings of missionarydom.

The Marquesans, crossed as they are with the blood of early Spanish buccaneers, are a goodly step handsomer than the Tahitians. The costumes worn are the same as all over the East Pacific, the variations in head-dress and occasional amulets of beads or pearl-shell being the only noticeable additions. The missionaries, of course, have laboured long and earnestly to discourage coquetry in open daylight, and like her Tahitian counterpart, the Marquesan *pahoe* (girl) is a night-blooming cereus—that is, she blooms at night even if she's not serious. I suppose they are civilised. To all intents and purposes they conduct themselves like perfect ladies. But situations *will* arise at times, and not all the fortitude in creation can save a bashful man from accidents of an embarrassing order.

The rivers of Hivaoa, be it said in parenthesis, are, unlike those of the Society group, shallow and sandy, and save in one or two favoured localities, it is impossible to get any-

## Missionaries

thing resembling a decent swim in any of them.

Among the passengers of the *Croix* was a neat, pink, dapper little man named Cradock, whose business lay in representing some part of the Union people's interests in Atuana. He had been born innocent, as many of us are—and had managed by some weird mischance to retain the morals of his early school days clear away into middle life. A bad state of things, especially in the islands.

Cradock and I had been skirmishing around in the sun for some hours in quest of photographs, and both of us were longing for a bath. We knew little of the island's geography—for Cradock spent most of his time in Papeete—and still less of the language. We pestered every native we came across, Cradock persistently talking Tahitian as though conversing over the fence of his own flower-garden at home, for "a river—a river—*pape* (water), you block-head—*pape*. Try your luck with him, old man. I can't make the fellow understand."

I puffed out my cheeks, spat out an imaginary mouthful of water, and worked my arms in imitation of Lucy Beckwith doing the mile for the championship. The native stared, and believing me a case for the asylum, backed away. We were desperate.

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In the cool shade of a banana-patch one of the Atuana trader-boys was enjoying a noonday siesta, his coffee-coloured native wife bending over him with a palm-leaf fan. Cradock renewed his entreaties, and this time he was understood. Putting aside her fan, the young lady stepped neatly out and offered to show us the way.

This nearly knocked Cradock senseless. To be shown the way to his bath by a young lady! What would his wife say? Besides, the sun was hot and politeness forbade. The charmer's offer was declined with thanks. We left her hubby snoring in the hammock and hurried on, Cradock glancing furtively behind him every now and then to see if the fair one was following.

We found the river sure enough. The water certainly looked shallow, but appearances are often deceptive, and we devoutly prayed it might prove deep enough to get a square wash. We undressed. Tourists in out-of-the-way corners of the globe cannot be expected to carry bathing suits. Cradock piled his linen reverently on the bank and advanced—treading delicately like a cat on hot coals—for he was a nice man and his feet were tender. Alas for our hopes! The puddle was a miserable fraud.



*Girls in Canoe.*



## The Crucifixion of Cradock

There was not enough water in it to rise above one's knees. There were swarms of darting fish and pretty dainty islands of lotus-bloom—but we had come for a swim, not for water-colour sketching, and we found nothing to admire. The sun was grillingly hot, too, and even sitting down, there was hardly water enough to prevent one's back from being skinned.

Then—shades of Ilyssus!—we heard a silvery laugh behind us, and three young ladies in pale mauve frocks and pendant necklaces of pineapple beads, thoughtful and unabashed as the handmaidens of Nausicaa, stood chuckling on the bank.

I edged discreetly behind a bush. The youngest of the girls, picking up her skirt in her right hand the way a London belle does when she wants to cross a muddy pavement, advanced smiling into the stream to where Cradock sat paralysed with terror, the sunlight gleaming prettily over his white limbs and delicate ivory forehead. The unprotected beauty of the blushing *Beretane* doubtless struck a sympathetic chord in her artistic sense. She stooped and patted Cradock on the back.

The man's position was awful! He dared not rise and run for the shore, and those paltry ten inches of water were no protection. It was a

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pity he didn't at least think of stirring up the mud. As it was he simply hugged his knees and, pink as a strawberry ice, glowered at the fair one in an agony of shame and rage.

O Cradock! Had that scene only been "snapped" by my photographic camera, what a hell of picturesque terrors could I have raised at your virtuous fireside—a hell that not all the picked, saintly eloquence of your oily rhetoric could hope to quell or crush.

"*Menehenhe roa ta oe ruru*" (beautiful hair you have) said Nausicaa, running her lithe fingers contemplatively through Cradock's curls. The latter was nearly weeping.

"*Haré!*" (go) he blurted, giving the young lady a dig with his fist that spoke volumes in favour of modesty and outraged principles. The nymph understood. Maybe she felt snubbed. Anyway she giggled spasmodically and consented to rejoin her companions under the bushes, where the lot of them studied us in silence for some minutes before withdrawing.

Cradock's nerves have been recovering ever since.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### MISSIONARIES—VISIT TO A LEPER VILLAGE

“God that makes time and ruins it  
And alters not—abiding God  
Changed with disease her body sweet,  
The body of love wherein she abode.”

—*The Leper.*

THERE was a fine classic gathering of natives in the alleyways leading seawards from the main lane of Atuana. M. Vernier, the most popular missionary of the group, had just returned from a prolonged visit to his father in Papeete, and his parish were assembled in full force to do him honour.

An interesting collection—seeing that only a few years ago the Hivaoans were rank cannibals. Few men. In Atuana as in Ilfracombe woman knits for the laity. Girls of all ages, many of whom could say with Amestris—

“Strange flesh was given my lips for bread  
With poisonous hours my days were fed ;”

likewise a sprinkling of children, some of them chewing gingerbread, a most undisciplined proceeding ; Madame Vernier, rather shaken from

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the prolonged sea-journey, presiding over the whole like a goddess who recognised her work and found it good.

Hivaoa—like most antipodean localities—has its full compendium of divines. The natives are, as elsewhere in the Pacific, an open-minded collection of cynics whose religious beliefs go hand in hand with their interests, or their sense of risibility, or both. Protestant and Catholic ministers have alike established themselves, and a sort of guerilla warfare, with Bible for round shot and holy water for grape, is carried on unintermittingly between the two sects. Each advocator of salvation mistrusts the next man, and the list of conversions is watched over as jealously as the invitation schedules of the Cowes Squadron Club. It is a ridiculous rivalry business at best, and gives rise to a variety of funny complications.

Here is a specimen :

An unsophisticated Marquesan—a child of the wilderness—glorious in picturesque nudity, frescoed with tattooing like an Italian mosaic, steps to his door to welcome a happy, well-fed priest, a zealot in the cause and a venerated emissary of the Church of Rome. The Christian faith is discussed at length and conversion proposed. The Marquesan hesitates. To chime in with the dictates of the new faith he must forswear

## Missionaries

long pig, wear trousers, and go back on the traditions of his family.

Will the priest make it worth his while? The priest hems and haws. His superiors have urged him to spare no expense for the heathen's ultimate salvation. He throws open a neat brass-bound chest and displays a collection of shawls, knives, watches, &c., convincing enough to lure a bigger island than Hivaoa into the straight and narrow way. *Kao-ha!* Good. Bargain closed then and there. The unsophisticated one kneels down and is baptised a Catholic.

The months roll by. Enter a Protestant missionary. He is neater in appearance than the priest, sports brass buttons and a gold watch-chain. The converted native interviews him and learns to his surprise that the road to heaven he has elected is the wrong one. No!—Catholics never go to heaven—never at all. The priest's red blanket, too—the price of conversion—is worn to a shred, and a duplicate is not forthcoming. The unsophisticated one decides to become a Protestant without delay, and does so.

“Tell me truly, O Hake Lao,” said an inquisitive New Zealand skipper to a converted Marquesan cannibal, “how often have you been baptised?”

A drink of rum had loosened the chief's tongue, and he replied with glee, “Four times Catholic and five times Protestant.”

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“You ought to be safe for heaven, anyhow,” grunted the skipper.

For all this, both classes of missionaries do good work in the Marquesas—going miles across these sun-baked hills to minister consolation, and not hesitating to visit even the leper-haunted settlements of the interior valleys if the duty of the Most High calls.

And here we come to the serpent that lies beneath the rose. Leprosy! We called on the principal Catholic missionary of the place, and the tale he had to tell was a sad one. The disease is carrying off the population at a terrible rate—thirty-seven deaths to seventeen births is the result shown by last year's census. At this rate, our children's children will know of the Marquesans as we know of the moa and the dinornis, through the agency of museums and legends. There is no really effective method of combating the evil. A centralised system of hospitals might have a beneficial effect, but the island trade is hardly worth the expenditure, and as yet no kindly minded philanthropist is at hand to step between Azrael and his victims. The malady is a pestilence that walks by day. I verily believe, from what I saw, that a full third of the island's population is more or less infected. So slight and unobtrusive are the early symptoms of the disease, however, that unless your attention



*Group of Natives, Marquesas Islands.*



## Visit to a Leper Village

were called to their existence you might pass by without noticing anything. The stroll back through Atuana village was several degrees less enchanting than our first ramble. Now that we were fairly on the look-out the malady seemed to crop up at every turn. A girl offered a bunch of flowers. Looking down, I noticed with a rising of the hair that her toes were disfigured with unsightly white patches. She was a leper. After that I began to look on every one with suspicion—in my ignorance, no doubt, mistaking many for afflicted when they were physically sound. No attempt seems to have been made as yet to segregate, as a precautionary measure, the healthy and unhealthy. In Tahiti, it is true, one of the most blooming valleys beyond Paea—fifteen miles from Papeete—used to serve as a leper-settlement. Marua-Po the natives called it. Of late supervision has everywhere relaxed, and the people herd together both in Tahiti and the Marquesas indiscriminately. A pitiful sense of their own corruption and perhaps the pressure of public opinion has driven some of the more hopeless cases to seek refuge in the jungles of the interior, where they wait for the end with a composure and fortitude rarely found among their civilised masters.

I had an opportunity some weeks later of visiting one of these settlements. It was not a

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far journey as the crow flies, only four miles ; but owing to the nature of the country most of the miles were vertical ones and the most infantile of reasoning obviously suggested something original in the way of locomotion.

The originality came, and for the first time in my life I became acquainted with that strangest, weirdest, nimblest of all animal constructions—the Marquesan horse.

Physically, he is not much to look at. He is small, stunted, unpicturesque, with angular suggestions about his hocks and withers that proclaim the want of a square feed. Gymnastically speaking he is the direct cross between the mule and the chamois. No declivity is too steep, no precipice too inaccessible for him. The mountain paths of Hivaoa are as easy to tread as a verandah railing and as irregularly graded as the spiked top of Milan Cathedral. But the Marquesan horse likes them. They suit his angular structure and harmonise with his weird, famished, energetic nature. We had started early, in the moist, slippery dawn, to avoid the heat, and even while we pawed our way through the comparatively facile guava scrub and the ocean of rotting tree-stumps lining the base of the hills, I knew I had struck something throwing the vaunted Mexican plug into the shade. But it was when we left the underbrush and began to climb the precipice



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that the height and breadth of my steed's genius began to show itself. There were moments when I believed he must have claws in his fore-feet. Several times when we came to a slope of friable clay, slippery enough and treacherous enough to launch an army into the Hereafter, I held my breath wondering what my horse would do. I didn't wonder long. A snort, a struggle, and he was on top. Avalanches of loose stones, beds of vicious cactus-needles, had no terrors for him. When after an hour's hard climbing we came to a place where a landslip had wiped the path out of existence—leaving an ugly smear ending in a thousand-foot drop—he actually laughed and tried to stand on his head for sheer joy!

On we clomb—up that dizzy slope, while the plain of palms dwindled to a furry expanse of yellow and green and the overhanging peak of Temeti receded farther and farther into its diadem of cloud. By ten we had gained the summit of the ridge, and the long winding shore of Hivaoa appeared spread out like a map. The descent recommenced, this time on the opposite side of the ridge. Once again the shadows of the jungle swallowed us. The place was gloomy—only through gaps in the tree-crowns came gleams of yellow light from the lit hills above. Nature seemed unusually blooming in that forest of death. Strings of healthy-looking rosy man-

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goes dangled within reach of one's arm. The shadows smelt of ferns and dripping undergrowth, and the ground was thick in bulbous juicy stuff through which the horse's hoofs squashed with a noise like mixing salad.

The grey drift of smoke came through the trunks. We reached a clearing. Some one hailed us in answer to my companion's halloo, and an old man, stick in hand, hobbled forward. I gave one look at his face and turned sick. He had lost—no, never mind. Of what use are such details? Across the green tops of a patch of sugar-cane—the baby effort of some stricken wretch—appeared a row of tiny pandanus-roofed burrows. The old man took my horse by the bridle and it seemed to me that the healthy beast even started at the touch of that pathetic horror. In one of the huts I could see a woman kneading something in a bowl. The old man held out his hand to me.

“Do so,” said my companion, *sotto voce*, “it's not catching.”

I obeyed with some slight misgiving, for the absolute non-catchiness of leprosy in its advanced stages has hardly been proved as yet. Then come the children—a sickly looking crowd for the most part, with old, frightened faces, nervous shifting eyes, and a sullen, demure manner that strikes pitiful contrast with their tender years. Have these mites ever known the kiss of the

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pure sea, the dances, the music, the breath of healthy life in that busy world from which the touch of the Fiend has cut them off for ever? Yonder tall girl with the delicate brown limbs and pensive eyes, who stands looking at us from among the flowers like some shy creature of the forest, has she ever known the romps of the village school, the frothing of brown limbs in the tumbling water-rows, the frolics in the moonlight, and the whirling music of the dance in the nymph-haunted palm-clearings? No—for the mark of the destroyer is on her. Even as you look she hides something for shame in her dress. There is no hand there—only a withered stump, shocking to see. They say, too, that leprosy is hereditary, and bred of wickedness. If so, the sins of the fathers hang heavily in that orchid-scented air. Three more children approach, two of them half-naked. Of what use are the decencies when death is so near? They sink coughing on the grass, not in the sun, but in the deepest shadow, where the clean blessed light of heaven may not shrink from meeting their piteousness. Who may you be, and what manner of errand brings you? Perhaps you are a praying-man, come to tell them of hell and its furies—of the judgment that awaits bad people who are discontented with their lot—or worse still, to tell them of the world and its myriad promises, of the fair radiant God

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to whom the prayers of little children are as incense—here in this valley of the shadow where His fair image has been outraged and foully defaced! The very light in your eyes is an insult. Life blooms for you. For them it has been a pale mockery seen through the tear-mist of suffering. All the pathos, the vanity, the despair of human existence find expression in the shade of those mangoes.

A thin anæmic-looking man slinks from one of the huts, and takes his seat on the grass; then a woman of middle age, her forehead furrowed with the ploughings of a thousand awful hours.

Listen to their story. These two were lovers. By all human laws they were destined to be man and wife. But the evil smote the man on the threshold of his happiness. He woke up—it was only a month to the wedding—to find himself a leper.

What was he to do? Marry the girl of his choice and drag her down to a loathsome death? In his despair he found his bride's relations, and told his awful secret. They counselled instant separation. The girl herself would not hear of such a thing. She loved him, and would marry him in spite of everything. The relations argued, threatened, cajoled—in vain. Then, as a last resource, they tried their eloquence on the man. Here they were more successful. The lover

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would never suffer such a doom to overtake the woman he loved. He fled by night—a voluntary exile—from his native island of Tahuata, and buried himself in the deepest recesses of a valley. But love was too strong. Forgetting everything, liberty, friends, life even, the girl left her home and fled after him.

You, poor wretch, preferred a lonely life of exile to the possibility of marking the woman of your heart with the curse that had laid you low. And you, devoted and affectionate wife, preferred a lingering death in his company to the vanities of an existence that had no charm for you without his love.

Well, well—it makes one feel very small to think of what the unselfishness of your sex can accomplish. And I am not sure the valley is so dark either. It may be a ray of light has struck a clump of flowers yonder, or it may be something else—the glow of a love that can lighten even this pit of misery into something resembling the heaven promised you by the Giver of all love. What folly to deny the beauty of human nature! Under the bear-skins of the Norseman, under the coarse garb of the Breton peasant, under the magnificent mail of the Wagnerian hero, or the soiled tatters of a South Pacific savage—we find it again and again.

## CHAPTER XXV

### NUKAHIVA—A CANNIBAL QUEEN—PICNICS— CONVICTS

“Where some refulgent sunset of India  
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,  
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods  
Whisper in odorous heights of even.”

—TENNYSON.

HIVA OA, though in some ways the most beautiful of the Marquesas, is by no means the most important. The capital town of the islands—Taiohae—is situated on Nukahiva, a sea-girt oval measuring thirty miles in length by fifteen in width. Like the first island, the origin of Nukahiva is volcanic. There are the same twisted beds of lava, the same breakneck gullies, the same pillared formations of basalt and terraces of scoria hidden under carpets of guava and trailing convolvulus.

The picturesque fishing-village of Taiohae, called by courtesy a town, nestles prettily in the loop of a deep bay shadowed by vertical cliff-walls. As there is no trace of a reef the waves roll in on the black sand in all their fury.

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Beyond the rows of scattered villas composing the town the ground extends up in wavy rolling hills till, as in Hivaoa, a steep amphitheatre of rock checks the flood of onrushing verdure.

There used to be an old saw, promulgated by some observant island-skipper, to the effect that it is easier to smell the Marquesas than see them. This—particularly if one sails in on a misty morning—certainly applies without much violence to Nukahiva. At ten miles from land one already notices a change. The sea breezes are bearing a new burden on their wings, an odour quite distinct from the true smell of the islands, one that has no affinity with anything one has hitherto experienced. It comes from the cassi-plant (at least that is the name they give it), a sort of shrub or low bush, recalling in general outline the ever-present ti-scrub of Australia, but covered, in lieu of white flowers, with a myriad of tiny, fluffy, yellow balls which, if one is hardy enough to venture a walk through them, cover one from head to foot with their golden powder. The hills of Nukahiva, in fact, contain the fortunes of quite an army of perfumers. I suppose something ought to be done. Certain it is that a prolonged sojourn in these lands fills one as much with a grim pity at the opportunities wasted as with admira-

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tion for the theoretical or picturesque value of things.

Taiohae is Papeete in miniature. There is the Broom-road, the white church spire, the sleepy flotilla of trader-schooners, and bobbing jumble of outrigger canoes all complete. Nay, as one slides up in the light of morning, one is even surprised to find what one never found in Tahiti—a pier. A ramshackle, stickified edifice of wood, with protruding rusty bolts to trip one up, and holes to break one's leg in, but still a pier. There is also a lighthouse—a decayed bird-cage with a paraffin wick dangling at the top of a ten-foot pole. Behind the lighthouse on a grassy knoll rises the mansion of the governor, a comfortable, airy, suburban villa, with a garden full of roses and a white, happy, chalky bust of the *Republique* to greet one over the doorway. This is civilisation.

The population of Taiohae is contemplative rather than energetic. The same fruitfulness of soil is at the bottom of their idleness as in all the other islands of this favoured hemisphere. The place is a kitchen-garden and conservatory combined. Oranges, citrons, guavas, custard-apples, avanas, avocas, coco-nuts, and two-thirds of the vegetables proper to temperate climes grow in a profusion which has something impertinent about



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it. There is an embryo steam cotton-mill, a natural dry dock (in Anaho Bay), and a water supply several grades less intermittent than the Papeete one. Tobacco and indigo grow wild, as also do aniseed and kava-root. The native women are supposed to be past mistresses in the art of making "tappa" (birch-bark cloth), though like their sisters in Papeete they generally keep the stuff for the edification of the tourist, preferring the more easily acquired European or Chinese prints for their own use. The sewing-machine is as common as the cuckoo-clock in Switzerland, and every second house can boast one. Taiohae has for some years past also been the penal station of the Eastern Sea. The convicts in question are mostly criminals of the petty class—illicit tobacco-merchants, kava-drunkards, filchers of chickens, and dabblers in all kinds of variegated naughtiness. The inflicted labour is road-making. If the roads of Nukahiva are intended to speak for the system, justice must be humane, very humane indeed. There is no jail. Such an institution would be useless—as it would be difficult to leave the island without detection, and equally difficult to annoy its inhabitants by staying. It is an ideal brigand's paradise.

The queen of Nukahiva, Vaekehu, is a charming old lady. If they should tell you the yarn

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about her having helped to eat her first husband, you had best treat it as pure fable. She inhabits a pretty creeper-covered cottage in full view of the harbour, and is amazingly popular with the authorities.

On the beach road I cannoned into Jimmy Gibson, purser of the *Croix*, who had been amusing himself speculating in shell at Hikueru. Jimmy was in the best of spirits. His native wife was a resident of Taiohae, and the lady's rumoured preference for a Chinaman had lately caused poor Jimmy several sleepless nights. Instead of the anticipated note pinned to the pillow-case, however, Jimmy had landed that morning to find his partner faithful, affectionate, and all his own! Never had such a thing been heard of! Jimmy begged me to photograph the lady at once. Out she came, blushing, rosy, perfumed like a Madonna, a very Venus stirred from slumber. But what use is it to enthuse? Pretty girls are no rarity here, and in Nukahiva—as in Bath—comparisons are odorous.

By way of additionally commemorating the incident, a picnic was proposed—with camera and girls. The latter refused point-blank. The day was grilling, and they didn't see the fun of being driven about in the sun merely for the sake of a roasted hog and a moiety of flirtation. They

## Nukahiva

could have both at home. Jimmy prayed, but the damsels were adamant. Our own company had to suffice us that day.

A pair of horses and a roofed dray—I am loth to call it a waggon—were secured. We hired the services of a Kanaka driver and rattled hungrily about Taiohae canvassing for food. Jimmy had promised us a regular native feed. First the boys hunted up a couple of bottles of wine at one of the stores. Then we intercepted a native carrying a magnificent ten-pound fish at the end of a long pole. There were plenty of bananas and *faies*, but we wanted something more solid, and none of us knew how to set about getting it.

Then—joy!—a small pig with echinus-like bristles lining his back ran squawking across the road and disappeared between some whitewashed fence rails. Jimmy, being the linguist, descended and bargained with the proprietor. A moment later we heard a shrill squeal, and out came something tenderly wrapped in aromatic banana-leaves and tied with twisted coco-fibre. It was the pig. “Now,” said Jimmy, “we shall not be many moments.”

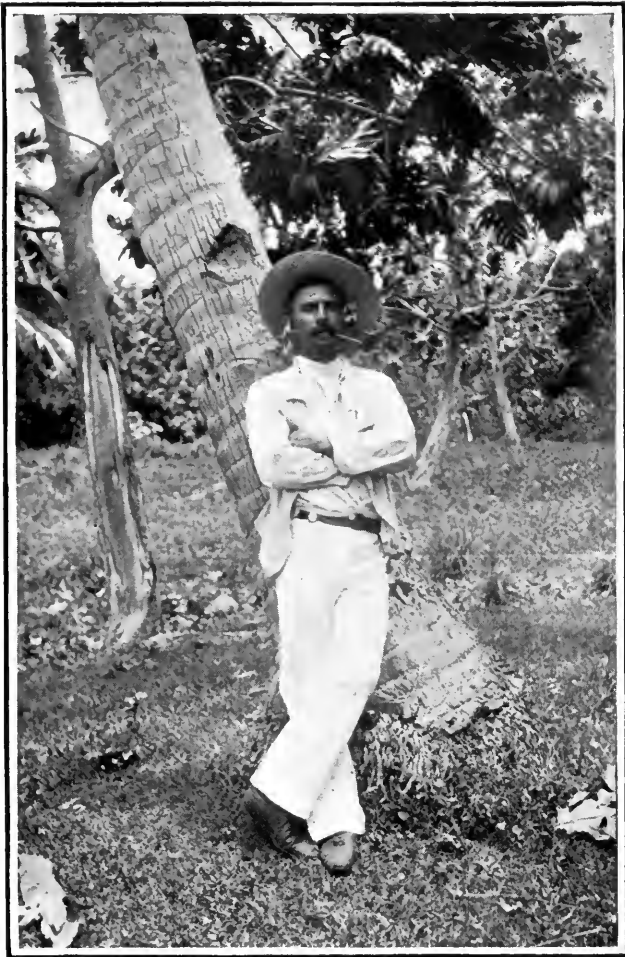
But the vegetable trimmings had yet to be secured. By a lovely little villa a mile towards the mountains some graceful fronds of bread-fruit were bending over the fence. It is only in the

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Marquesas that you would dream of coolly stepping into a man's garden to rifle his fruit-trees. The task of picking the big green bulbs was more difficult than it looked. Bread-fruit generally hangs just out of reach. It is a mistake to jump at it. The rough skin cuts your fingers to pieces and leaves you sore and rumped for the rest of the day. Wild sweeps with a pole are no use whatever. They maul the fruit and make it uneatable. Presently two girls came out with tall chairs and a knife, and the fruit was detached without difficulty. I don't believe Jimmy paid for the fruit, but I know he put his arm round one girl and told her she was the life of his soul and that he had come to Nukahiva for the express purpose of completing her education—"Na oe ha pee tié" (for I saw him do it).

*En avant!* The shades of the forest grew deeper, and through the twining maze of branches the great crest above shot back the sun as from a reflector. Presently we reached a likely spot. Jimmy and the Kanaka driver proceeded to collect brushwood to roast the porker, while I, curious on the score of South Sea island cookery, superintended the chopping-up and pickling of the fish.

The genesis of raw fish is simple enough. It is hardly likely that any true Kanaka would take



*Jimmy Gibson.*



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the trouble to cook anything when he could, by stretching his tastes a trifle, get a meal without that labour. One of the boys armed himself with a knife. The long, silver creature was split in half along the backbone, cut into strips, laid on a leaf and dosed with oil, vinegar, and chili-pepper. To all intents and purposes it was pickled. Yet it is funny to see what a horrible grimace the average European will make at the mention of this dish. Try it, ye grumblers—try it. All the reasoning in the world won't do away with the fact that it is quite as civilised as salt pork and a good deal more humane than oysters. Traveling is currently admitted to enlarge the mind; may we not honestly admit that it enlarges the palate as well?

The bread-fruit came next on the list. You can cook bread-fruit in fifty different ways. You can boil it like a potato, fry it, devil it, broil it, stew it, bake it, pickle it. The easiest and pleasantest way of all is to roast it under a bonfire. It goes into the ashes green and comes out a black charred mass which you presently split away with the knife to disclose the snow-white interior, bolt upright on its calcined stalk like a monstrous egg of flour.

And the taste? Oh, well—mix soap, flour, indiarubber, sand, suet, and cheese together in a jumble. That ought to fetch the taste of bread-

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fruit all right. If it don't—like Mark Twain's pistol—it will fetch something else, and that something else will be a Marquesas-island vegetable, for they all taste alike.

The poetry of that savage collation abides with me yet. Sitting cross-legged on the moss, our necks wreathed with verbena, our brows with tuberose, we were indeed a noble quartet to carry the greeting of Europe to the people of the sea. The scene yet remains impressed like a photograph. The sombre canopy of trees, the dusty spears of sunshine, the roasted pig on his back on the platter of leaves, the smoking bread-fruit, and the sour, biting French claret at fifty centimes the quart. Such things embalm the memory. Of such may the gods grow jealous!

At the dessert I got a startler. Our Kanaka had shown himself a noble waiter, but after imbibing half a bottle of that wondrous claret, he got fairly wound up to concert-pitch and offered to show us the original Marquesan hoola, as danced in prehistoric times. He did. It was nimble, but not pretty. For compliment, I suggested he ought to try it at night on the beach and pass round the hat. He cottoned to the idea, but had to admit it was impossible; for, as he said: "Me convict, sah—me live in jail, sah."

This was fact, not fiction. Our worthy Kanaka



## Convicts

had got himself condemned to a year's solitary confinement for some misdemeanour, and was really supposed to be boarding at Queen Vaekehu's—or the Government's—expense. Inasmuch, however, as this mode of punishment was apt to spoil his chances of making a living, the kind Government allowed him to roam freely, only stipulating that he was to appear every evening and announce himself to the authorities before going to bed.

In fact, the Taiohae jail was at one time quite a popular institution. It was discovered that the tiled roof leaked less in the rains than the primitive leaf-thatches, and for a season, criminals in Nukahiva went genially on the increase. With advancing years, however, the jail soon relapsed into the reigning condition of artistic “jommethry.” The windows got smashed in due course and, ever since Government has decided not to replace them, crime has been at a discount in breezy Taiohae.

Taiara i Tikei (name of the Kanaka) was *en outre* a descendant of royalty and magnificently tattooed—a notable fact, for the genuine art of tattooing is fast becoming a lost one, and a really fine human mosaic is nearly as great a curio in Nukahiva as an old soldier in Virginia or a Balaclava pensioner in Holborn.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

Tattooing is a distinctly painful operation at all times, and I have been told hurts nearly as much as being skinned. Few men get beyond the anchor and life-belt ordeal. In Tahiti, among the sentimental Kanaka youth, it is the fashion to have the name of your inamorata tattooed on your arm—an obviously silly idea, for the mark always outlives the passion, and should the lady's successor be cast in a jealous mould, must be a source of bickering.

And this brings us to a melancholy figure—the original tattooed white man of Nukahiva, John W. Hillyard, Esq.

His story is pathetic. It needs telling to slow music. Also it contains a moral, which, it is hoped, the succeeding narrative will make plain without further comment.



*Roasting Bread-fruit.*



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE STORY OF JOHN HILLYARD

“Love’s ways are sharp for palms of piteous feet  
To travel—but the end of such is sweet :  
Now do with me as seemeth you the best.”

HE came from God knows where, and was bound for the same dread locality. A raw, inexperienced, baggy-kneed youth of eighteen who had probably run away from some San Francisco school and been signed in on board the *Nancy Dawson* just because crews were scarce, and the Marquesas (this was in the sixties) had an ugly man-eating reputation among seamen.

On reaching Nukahiva the *Nancy Dawson* was beached in Anaho Bay for repairs, and supervision was temporarily relaxed. Hillyard had been at school a romantic, absent-minded, fiction-reading lad, whom all the bullying in the world hardly could rouse from apathy. Now, under the novel colouring of his surroundings, some of his boyish enthusiasm returned. He saw himself in the paradise of his dreams, and the pure delight of it stabbed to his heart like

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

the premonitory symptoms of the passion that was to be his ruin. He deserted—spent a night in the bush, and eventually reached Taiohae, where, as white labour was scarce, he obtained employment in a French trading firm, the first and oldest one in the islands.

Competition was anything but keen, and in a very short while Hillyard rose from errand-boy and bottle-washer to the command of the *Tikehan*—a diminutive thirty-ton schooner, mainly used to advertise the firm's doings and drum up trade for future commercial enterprise.

Those were golden days. Hillyard found himself a genuine South Sea trader. Standing erect on the poop, he drank in ideas of liberty with the smell of copra from the hatches, and the shock of the combers as they struck the *Tikehan's* sides were the cymbal clashes of nature rejoicing with him. The first trips were short ones. The buttresses of Nukahiva had barely time to die in the warm rain before the long line of Huapu shook itself free from its girdle of mist and revealed itself to the seer in the glory of palm-gullies and flying cloud-tatters. Then came the sleepy noon, with the droning chatter of women under the awnings, and last of all the silver magic of the night with the drift of voices on the rain-scoured air and

## The Story of John Hillyard

the twinkle of torches in the water. Hillyard was one of nature's poets, and no kindly warning came to tell him of the disaster impending.

Once in the midst of a noonday siesta—the *Tikehan* was lying off Huapu at the time—some one hailed him from the shore. Two graceful figures in scarlet stood on the grass. One was Mariamma, the Christianised daughter of a cannibal chief, whose bamboo stockade was just visible through the wall of greenery; the other was her married cousin, Mau (pronounce Ma-oo), the most inveterate matchmaker and scandal-monger of the district.

Hillyard descended to the cabin an hour later walking on air. Mariamma's eyes had done what the owner had intended. The girl had driven a monstrous bargain, but Hillyard was satisfied. He determined that if the parties at Taiohae objected, he would waive financial considerations and pay the difference from his salary. That night there was a hoola on shore. As Hillyard sat cross-legged on a mat, and tried to smoke his pipe in time to the dancers' wriggings, some one crept from out the cloud of whirling drapery and threw a flower in his face. It was Mariamma. The token was only a tiny thing of little import, but it brought a crimson flood to the man's cheek, and left his heart throbbing

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with a wild feeling of emptiness. Hillyard sculled his way back on board and tried to sleep. Next morning, as the *Tikehau* felt her way out through the oily water, the shore wind brought something besides the breath of awakening flowers to Hillyard's nostrils. There was a spiral of smoke between distant palm-branches, and the skipper's gaze turned to where a long, grey roof-thatch, *her* home, nestled into its copse of bread-fruit. The girl's image had grafted itself on Hillyard's heart, and not the poetry of a thousand dawns could blot it out.

It was nearing the close of the year when he saw her again. Hillyard had worked hard at the island lingo, and this time he was able to do more than offer sweetmeats. He got scant encouragement, however. Mariamma did not like pale faces. But Hillyard amused her and kept her in chocolates. Therefore she feigned sympathy.

Her cousin Mau was more explicit. "You leave Mariamma be—she no got use for you, you silly dam white man you." Mariamma, on the mat, having eaten her fill of chocolates, put in her say. She said "*Haré!*" (go) in a tone that spoke volumes, and sent Hillyard flying from the house in an agony of despair. He passed the night among the palm-stems in a black hell of misery, and only returned on board his ship when the



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shouts of the men warned him it was time to start.

In Taiohae the company's doings were broadening. Another vessel was to be started in the trade, and the *Tikehau*, together with her skipper, was relegated to coasting round Nukahiva. This meant to Hillyard separation from his goddess. He did not hesitate. He determined to quit the company for good, return and settle in Huapu.

Mariamamma was not glad to see him, for he came poor and positionless, and the cabinful of print was a thing of the past. Mariamma's heart, like that of many proper young ladies, went hand in hand with her interests. At Hillyard's offer of marriage she laughed boisterously. With true island candour she called him a pig of a foreigner and told him his white face made her sick. In the early days of his courtship Hillyard would have keenly felt the sting of her words, but now love had cast out pride, and the more she abused him the more angelic did she appear.

Temaki, Mariamma's young brother, a copper-coloured Apollo of fifteen, tattooed all over like a willow pattern, tried mediation. Hillyard had bribed him freely with sticks of tobacco, and he felt kindly disposed to the love-sick Beretane. He expostulated with his sister. White men

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were not all blackguards. As for Hillyard's face, he, Temaki, would soon remedy that. He produced a bundle of pointed bones and a calabash of sticky black gum. Temaki was the artist of the village and burning for a chance to show off.

Hillyard was nearly out of his mind. This was why, when Temaki came to him that evening with an absurd proposition, instead of genially kicking the youth into the street with his blessing, Hillyard gave Temaki his last ounce of tobacco and began to seriously ponder over the matter as a university professor might over a new and weighty problem in philosophy.

He would let Temaki tattoo him in approved island fashion, he would discard his European trousers and wear a pareo instead—he would give all up and become a native. His Beretane origin once effaced, Mariamma's heart would soften.

The idea was that of a madman—but Hillyard was in no condition to reason clearly. Temaki got his pointed bones and set to work. He commenced by scoring Hillyard's face with broad green bands which, descending from the forehead, lost themselves in a whirlpool of concentric circles in either cheek and fell away down the neck in tassels. Hillyard's breast he marked with a chess-board—not proportioned according to the rules of Staunton—and a

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spreading mango-tree with two plethoric hogs guzzling the fallen fruit was elected to adorn his back. Two venerable Kanaka hags assisted at the operation, and sang tunes to drown Hillyard's groans. At the end of the week Mariamma's would-be lover was in a high fever. They put him to bed, wrapped him in a patchwork quilt and tied bandages on his forehead. When at last he was able to walk, Hillyard was a fearful object. The clumsy fish-bone needles had left swellings round the scored lines of his forehead. His face was deathly pale and the green circles stood out like mould on leather. Temaki himself was inclined to be frightened at his work.

It was some time before Hillyard dared show himself to Mariamma. When he did so the punishment of his foolishness came in a flood-tide of agony. Mariamma had been indifferent before, now she became horrified. She began by a fit of hysterics which terrified Mau, and wound up by spitting contemptuously at Hillyard and calling for her brother to take the "devil" out of the house.

Hillyard was like a man broken on the wheel. For months he led the life of an outcast, sleeping in rainy hollows and feeding on all kinds of vegetable offal. Why his mind did not give way

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is a mystery. He finally drifted back to Taiohae, where he obtained work on one of the newly formed plantations, and where his appearance won him a goodly meed of success among the lady population, many of whom were not blind to the charms of a novelty.

At present he is a man nearing the sixties, and one of the most singular ornaments of Taiohae harbour ; but not all the gold in creation can tempt him to tell the story of his love-affair, nor can he be persuaded to allow his photograph to be taken. The skeleton is closely locked in his mental cupboard, and the rambling *on dits* of merchant-skippers over Taiohae bar-tables, together with this (ahem!) interesting and printed tribute from the pen of a globe-trotter, are all that remain to keep alive the memory of the tattooed man and his heartless Mariamma.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A NUKAHIVA GOAT-DRIVE

“Katline Mapue, the gray dawn is breaking,  
The conch of the hunter is heard on the hill.”

—*Marquesan himené.*

To many men life, even island-life, is incomplete without sport of some kind.

Marquesan game is of a very small order. Curlews, plover, snipe, and a peculiarly bony variety of wild duck frequent the marshes, and can be tackled in the regulation way. There is plenty of pig, but they must be followed with the rifle, as the unevenness of the ground and the sparkling abundance of precipices make orthodox “sticking” an impossibility. In some of the larger islands of the Society group wild cattle are said to range the guava scrub in such numbers as to make exploration without a sufficient escort a dangerous pastime, but these hardly come under the head of game. Certain headlands along the coast of Nukahiva, too, afford a resting-place to millions of sea-birds—so tame that a boy of average intelligence can knock enough of them

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on the head in a single morning to make their feathers a drug in the market for weeks. This likewise is not sport.

But a sight of the real thing was not long in appearing. The first act of the drama was as follows. I had been lunching with the governor of Nukahiva, and with that exquisite civility characteristic of the French official in his dealings with the English tourist in island ports, the governor had instantly offered to despoil his garden of flowers to make me a bouquet. He wouldn't take a refusal. Two large-sized washing-baskets were to be filled. The supply seemed to me to be adequate, but the governor, who had calculated smothering my cabin in roses, complained bitterly. A promising half-acre of flower-bushes had been gnawed into unrecognisable "jommethry." The radishes in the kitchen-garden had been eaten to the last fibre. The wattle fence surrounding a portion of the domain had been chewed into unsightly gaps, and the beds of Michaelmas daisies had been converted into unedifying jam by a myriad tiny hoof-marks. It was a Liliputian outrage *al fresco*. The governor waxed wroth. He knew who the thieves were. The tiny, mischievous, skipping, musk-smelling wild goats of the mountains who fear neither God nor man. A drove of the

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creatures had broken in by night and treated themselves to a rose-dinner.

“This will never do,” explained the governor to his weeping gardener; “we must organise a hunt and teach these creatures manners. You can enlist the whole gang of *ces messieurs* Turi. We start at daybreak.” Then, turning to me—  
“*Cela vous va, hein?*”

It suited me to perfection. Taiohae, as I have already noticed, harbours, in addition to the usual compendium of island loafers, some dozens of interesting amateur convicts. They were the gang alluded to. When next morning some one stirred me up off my mat at the Chinaman's the lot of them were drawn up on the Beach-road at the turn leading to the governor's house. A fine collection of men—thirty or so all told—with just enough fire in their eyes, enough jauntiness in their blue trousers and leaf-woven hats to tell of dormant vagabondism. Half the number were armed with long pruning-knives (*machetes* they call them in Spanish), the remainder carried the long murderous Marquesan spear, embossed in a double row of baby white shark-teeth. For my part, not knowing precisely the part I was destined to play, I carried a miniature saloon-rifle, and the governor, who presently appeared, bore a similar weapon of the

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“repeating” kind, of a form sacred to the French colonial army alone. As we wended our way up the slope under the flamboyants the scheme of the morning’s work was explained to me. This was no artistic hunt, but a systematic massacre of offending vermin. A mile or so ahead the dark cliff-edge cut its monstrous silhouette against the morning sky. A cordon was to be formed at the base of the hill, and the animals driven steadily forward to the edge of the abyss. “And then,” concluded the governor, “you will see something funny—*quelquechose de bizarre*.”

The dawn was racing along the top of the highest *arête* as we struck the first belt of scrub. A thin mist was rising from the taro-ponds, and the spaces between the villas of Taiohae were dotted with flakes of filmy cotton. Then the fight began—cassi-brambles *versus* machete and hatchet combined, a merciless warfare, and one to fill your tailor’s heart with joy. Cassi-scrub is heathen stuff to traverse. When the opposing army of thorns have done lacerating your trousers the flying cloud of yellow pollen gets down your throat, and you feel as though you had swallowed the contents of a drug-store. The scenery, where we had time to look at it, was very fine. A mile out to sea the orange tips of the “sentinels” were hanging in sunshine.



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The remainder of the bay was deepest night, save where the struggling foam-patches caught a vague shimmer from the lit cliffs above. Several small schooners were hoisting sails in the harbour, and in the crescent of black sand we could see a knot of boys pushing with shrill cries a long flat-bottomed boat from its shelter under the buraos.

Then—hist!—a whisper ran along our line. A few hundred yards from where we stood, our trousers yellowed with cassi-pollen, several objects which I can only describe as misshapen black fleas, were skipping against the creeping band of light. A faint squeak, the protest of an insulted rag-doll, came down-wind. A Marquesan goat is a most insignificant atom. It seems impossible so much angular ungodliness can be condensed into so small a compass. The governor's arm went up like a semaphore. The men stopped swinging their machetes and covered obediently into the scrub. Now for a shot. There is not the slightest real necessity for using the firearm, inasmuch as the quarry can't escape us, and the terrible cliff-drop is not far off. But the marksman instinct is irresistible. The foremost goat stands on a knoll, snuffing the air, with cabalistic suggestions of horn and hoof which the animal's reputed instinct don't weaken in the least.

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Clearly he is alive to the situation. He can't have winded us, for the breeze is in our faces, but the whack of the machetes has gone before, and the red line of pareos is visible a long way, even in that mist-wreathed twilight.

Bang! He is up with a bound and the whole posse go skurrying away uphill with an eagerness that will take them to San Francisco in a week if the ocean doesn't spoil their game.

Now then, *mes enfants*. As we rise and dive impetuously into the ocean of yellow fluff the sun tops the ridge behind and burns the backs of our necks. Below in the gloom the pandanus roofs of Taiohae are only dull splotches. The ground is heaped up with huge lava-blocks, a mass of ghastly pitfalls. Lucky if any one escapes with a broken leg. And what is the good of all this rush, messieurs? *Festina lente*. The inevitable reaction sets in, and after a quarter of an hour's mad scrambling we have to call a halt. A stampede of elephants could hardly give us more trouble.

Hurrah! We have succeeded in fairly scaring them at least. A knot of the game is standing uncertain as the foremost body of men rush up—uncertain as to whether it will be best to dare the final slope of the hill, the one leading to the scene of execution, the cliff overhanging the sea. We

## A Nukahiva Goat-Drive

have been drawing nearer the base of this slope, which leads upwards at an angle of forty or so, for the last quarter of an hour. Some instinct tells the creatures that even though they succeed in topping the slope, no salvation awaits them there. Even in the heat of the chase a pang of pity goes through me on behalf of this huddled group of dumb creatures who, skip they never so bravely, must at last play their losing game and die.

No such thoughts animate the men, however. We are remorselessly closing in on the goats. There seems to be a sort of political leadership in the group. One body of animals remains pawing the base of the slope, the other, a small isolated regiment of ten, draw away to the left. There may be fifty *in toto* all told. Are they going to try and break the line? The men advance, their machetes rising and falling like flails. Yes! it is a forlorn hope, but one party is going to attempt it. Those strange beings who advance striking the brushwood aside in flashes of light may not be so dreadful after all. Once through that line of blue serge and liberty is theirs. The papa-goat throws up his nose, bleats angrily, and—whish!—away go the lot, scuttering across the rocks like an avalanche. Two of the men level their guns, but—bless you!

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—you might as well try and nail the wind. There is only the smell of smokeless powder, the sound of ripping foliages and the floating dust of nipped cassi-puffs. The goats have won their liberty.

Terror now strikes the other half. There is no way save the way of the slope, and up they go in a slanting line—beautiful marks for rifle bullets. We are close upon their heels, but seeing them straggle out thus over the face of the cliff one's murderous instincts almost make one regret one didn't stay behind. It would have been glorious shooting, but it is too late now and we must keep the game busy or they will double and break the line again.

Oh, the agony of that last slope! In my boyhood I had read of Grimm's enchanted road where for every step forward one fell back two. Now I met the thing in reality. There was no trace of a path. It was claw and climb and hang on as nails and eyebrows permitted.

At last — we are on the summit. A level stretch of grass with tiny blue flowers leads away to the wall of rock. The growl of the breakers comes to us faintly. Half-way across the lawn our poor frightened hunted quarry stands hesitating. Perhaps they feel they are gazing their last on the green world they love, perhaps it is merely

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startled animal curiosity. The governor appears panting and mopping his face with his handkerchief. As the men are about to throw themselves forward he stops them. The moment has not yet arrived. The flotilla had not yet rounded the heads. Should the goats elect to jump into the water they will be easily hauled on board and disposed of in Taiohae.

The governor leads the way to where a projecting claw of rock commands a view of sea and cliff-face. We may be from 500 to 600 feet above the water-level. There is a howling gale blowing, and I have to desperately clutch my helmet to prevent its taking wings and flying back to Taiohae. There are all manner of weird fissures in the scrub. Up one awful hole, poorly concealed by a deceitful canopy of lantana-blossoms, the menace of the water comes to us as through a speaking-tube. Fifty terrified mites of animals are bleating at the end of a red, knife-edged crag. Surely they will never have the courage to jump that. The flotilla of boats is still far off. If the goats go over the cliff now they will drown like rats. The men, despite their leader's caution, are jabbering as only Kanakas can jabber, and rattling their muskets. One or two of them have squatted down in the scrub and are lighting cigarettes.

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Then, while the boats are stupidly labouring round the heads, half a mile away at least, the end comes.

There is the sharp crack of a rifle. Some idiot has fired it by mistake. The foremost goat advances, squeaks; there is a sound of tearing foliage, and down he goes!—turning over and over along the red face of the cliff, and striking the water with a splash.

“Oh, the imbeciles!” says the governor. But the mischief is done, and nothing remains but to stay and watch the end of the drama. A second goat has approached the edge: over he goes. Then another and another. Panic has struck the band; they are hurling themselves methodically to destruction. Leaning over, craning my neck through that perilous lantana table-fringe, I can just see the foremost goat in the water, swimming bravely. A broad rocky plateau, nearly awash, rises beyond the ring of surf, fifty yards out. Fear lends strength, and the tiny dot is struggling to reach it. Safety, for all it knows, may lie there.

No—for even as we watch, comes another danger, dark and cruel as the grave—this time from the water. A pale shadow appears under the blue surface. An agonised squeal comes to our ears. The poor goat is gone. A shark has

## A Nukahiva Goat-Drive

got him. The governor is dancing with rage, and swearing in excited falsetto. What a waste of material! Little indeed is left for the boats to pick up. From every quarter of the sea come the hurrying forms of those white terrors, eager for their banquet of blood—and while the foolish sails flap helplessly to windward, death closes in on our frightened quarry. It is a massacre grim and great. The sharks are darting about like a shoal of herrings, fierce, insatiable as furies. It seems that even at that distance one can hear the rip of their protruding fins and the ponderous snap of the iron jaws. It is horrible—too horrible! We came for sport, and instead we have witnessed an orgy of blood that would discountenance an Indian rajah. The very waves are blushing apparently, for the shock of the combers leaves unsightly patches of crimson froth sticking to the rocks. The governor rises, flicks the dust from his trousers, and smiles philosophically.

“We have taught them a lesson anyhow,” he says, “and the next time you honour me with a visit, monsieur, you shall not want for roses!”

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### TAHITI AGAIN—PAPEETE IN GALA

“A thousand proas darted o’er the bay  
With sounding shells, and heralded their way.  
A thousand fires, far-flickering from the height  
Blazed o’er the general revel of the night.”

—*The Island.*

It was our last morning in Nukahiva. There was quite an array of ladies drawn up on the beach to wish us God-speed. The emotions of several simply boiled over.

“Whither are you going, *Beretane*?” queried one, hanging prettily on the engineer’s arm and ogling the second mate across her fan with the most lovable impartiality.

“Back to Tahiti, darling.”

“Take me with you—do.” The eyes look sincere enough, but travellers must learn to mistrust optical phenomena.

“Oh—she’ll go right enough, if you care to pay her passage,” says one of the traders brutally; “so will any of the others. It’s the French national fête in Papeete and the darlings are dying for a chance to show off.”

There is in fact method in Miss Ariitea’s



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madness. The months have slipped away only too pleasantly in breezy Nukahiva, and the fourteenth of July—the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille—is looming only a week ahead. No pains are to be spared to make the festival as brilliant as possible. A special excursion steamer has been run from Sydney. From the sands of the Paumotus schooners have contracted to bring parties of girls for the *himenés*. The Marquesas have despatched a contingent of their own, as also have the Leeward and Cook Islands. It is going to be what Americans call a magnificent blow-out.

Shortly before noon on the thirteenth the long gray slope of Tahiti appeared in the west—the peninsula of Taiarapu and the mountains behind Tautira. Signs of activity were already visible as we entered the harbour. A fleet of brand-new ships were bobbing at the anchorages. The Bougainville Club was a blaze of light, and the grassy border between the Customs and the Post-Office was a mass of tiny booths. A long black shadow—the ribbon of smoke from her funnel showing clear above the star-dust of Orofena—pointed to where the Sydney steamer (the *Waikaré*) was moored, and there were fluttering suggestions of flags and ribbons among the darkened trees of the Broom-road. My house was deserted, of course. The wooden steps were hidden under fallen leaves, and weeds had com-

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pletely obliterated the garden walk. Considering I had paid two amiable Kanaka ladies to look after the place in my absence, the living facts gave me a shock. There was only one refuge left—the hotel.

Considering the season, the night was hot and uncomfortable. Most Tahitian houses are built on an airy plan, but my room, with the sullen buzz of wasps in the ceiling and the odours of flowers and dew-laden banana-trees from the garden, was purgatory idealised.

Morning was ushered in by salvoes of crackers from the Chinaman's. Not the timid schoolboy squib of Guy Fawkes celebrity, but monstrous bundles of explosive festoons vicious and deafening enough to rouse the *toupapahus* of a hundred shadowy ancestors. The noise among those reverberating iron roofs was something awful.

As the sun peeped through the brushwood of Orofena a flood of conveyances began pouring along the Beach-road. An awful mixture of styles and vehicles. Every kind of contrivance was represented—from the smart C-spring buggy sacred to white ducks and laces, to the lowly packing-case on two wheels with its burden of six yelling Kanaka children and perhaps a pig or two. The Papara mail-coach, its wheels and horses neatly garlanded with flowers, presently put in an appearance, bringing sundry amiable

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old chiefesses with decorated hats and tins of food. There was a goodly sprinkling of bicycles, very popular among the half-caste element; one doughty Kanaka youth sported a home-made "bone-shaker" of a peculiar kind. Its wheels were simply disused barrel-ends, its framework a carpenter's saw-bench metamorphosed. The pedal-work had clearly puzzled the artist, so he had not attempted its construction—merely contenting himself with sitting astride of the bench and dabbing the ground with his feet. "Necessity," &c.

The company is as mixed as the vehicles. Military men in helmets and flashing buttons are helping down from their landaus delicate-looking French ladies with lace-fringed parasols and smelling-bottles—landing them rather incongruously among the genial, if easy-going sea-froth of vahines and longshore-men. The grass is fairly hidden under the groups of recumbent Kanaka musicians, who are torturing their accordions and jabbering love-songs as only Kanakas can. Monsieur Gallet, the governor, drives up magnificently in his high barouche, and surveys the scene nervously. The mixture of nationalities is unsettling, and the question of whom to invite to dinner becomes more poignant the more you think about it. A quarter of a mile from shore the *Aube*—that venerable relic of dead dockyards

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—has donned her largest and most triangular smile of flags, as also have the *Eva* (Moorea's private courier) and a score of smaller yachts. The Chilians have a device of their own—a seedy, bilious-looking one—suggestive of quarantine regulations. There is a tolerable sprinkling of Stars and Stripes, also of Union Jacks. One doughty Irish skipper, not to be behindhand, has hoisted the green and the harp. Good humour is catching and universal.

The short street leading past the *Faré Moni* from the quay to Pomaré's palace gate is a sight for the gods. It is literally choked with booths of all kinds. Jugglers, gambling tables, ice-cream vendors, liquor sellers, and dealers in flowers have taken up positions at the sides of the road and are all talking at once. Some astonishing swindles are being perpetrated. Innocent lady passengers from the *Waikaré* are purchasing slices of water-melon at twenty-five cents apiece. Considering melons are only worth five cents apiece in Tahiti, the vendor makes a fair profit. The most atrocious liquors are offered for sale at the drinking-booths, the labels of some being enough to give one the cholera without tasting the mixture inside. At a table, raised slightly above the others, a splendid gentleman in checks, with a suggestion of artificial jewellery in his shirt sleeves and a decided dash of the tar-brush in his complexion,

## Tahiti Again

is spinning a wheel with gaudy-looking numbers gleaming round the circumference, and, to judge from the ceaseless jingle of money on the baize counter beneath him, doing a rousing business. Next door to him, behind a barrow laden with indigestible biscuits, a Kanaka of a musical turn of mind is courting the muse and custom by playing the flute. The street, with its seething exotic crowd, its list of weird articles offered for sale, is a Nijni-Novgorod fair in miniature. A mock perfumery store sports a pile of bottles filled with compounds which only Papeete slums could witness the boiling of. A pot of railway grease, flavoured with essence of cloves, is labelled "Rimmel's Anodyne for the Hair." Another bottle, which, from the smell, I should judge to be filled with alcohol and lavender water, is styled Eau de Cologne—Jean Maria Farina. Tahiti trade is apparently as indifferent to libel as a New York opera pirate.

In Pomaré's garden the merry-go-round is in full swing. The thing itself is a poor contrivance enough, with steam gearing and mottled wooden horses, whose unnaturalness set the pre-Raphaelite masters at zero. Watch the people though. The trading schooners have swept them together from the funniest out-of-the-way islands. Just imagine the pride of a mother in some lost coral dab, who after a year's "screwing" takes her family of

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daughters to be "finished" in this giddiest of baby capitals. Queer notions of civilisation the poor things must get! Here on the grass you can see a bevy of timid brown things stand and gaze pensively at the merry-go-round. If you want to have some fun, buy a few tickets and distribute them among the innocents. The wooden horse is very tame. He won't either bite or kick. Like as not, if the girls come from some very small island, they will have never seen a horse or any beast larger than a pig. Never mind, start them on the machine. Off they go—to a jingling tune from "Madame Angot," with shrilling whistle and panting steam-pipe. Horrors! one of the beauties has been ill-advised enough to jump off, and goes rolling over on the grass a mass of flashing brown limbs and flying hair. Two more hang on with faces deathly pale. A fourth, the youngest of the bunch, has started sobbing and calling for mamma. The machine is stopped and they are let down, pleased but shaken. The amusements of the white *faranis* are as awful as their wickednesses.

Down by the water's edge a canoe race is in progress. The available strength of boats, ten or so, are drawn up some fifty yards from the unsightly coal-store of Fareute, each of them representing some village or province. The majority of the rowers are naked or nearly so, though some

## Tahiti Again

few have got themselves up to conquer in striped jerseys and floral crowns. Better leave those trickeries aside, gentlemen. This is a strife of muscle, not beauty. You can air your æsthetics to-night round the band-stand.

Cheers! They are off. A good start—but too hurried to ensure salvation for all. Those outrigger skiffs are not so innocent as they look. Pat the water the tiniest bit too hard and over you go like a Jack-in-the-box. There! One of them *has* gone over—the one headed by Charley Teriinui, a noted dandy and lady-killer. Dandies are at a discount here though. A yell of laughter heralds Charley's overthrow. He swims ashore, rumpled but still beautiful, to receive the consolation prize—the chattered sympathy of vahine-dom, which here, as elsewhere, carries balm to the afflicted heart.

And now, by common consent, the glances turn to where bobs on the water the tiny flagboat round which the canoes must pass. A shout and a waving of handkerchiefs. They have passed and are on the homeward track, Papeete leading, the Papara boat close at her heels. The finish is an exciting one. Ordinarily the way is clear enough, but to that holiday crew, most of whom have probably had recourse to the stimulus of the gin-bottle, more like to prove a path of destruction. The shouts of the crowd increase to a roar and

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the line of boats becomes a sea of coloured handkerchiefs and pareos. A close finish indeed. There is little to choose between the style of one boat and that of the other—but the currents round those snags of submerged coral are deceiving, and it would take a smart coxswain (if there were one) to decide the victory. No such niceties here though. Every one is tired and the paddles are splashing merrily. The leading boat is done up—a logical result of having played for the gallery too early in the game. The long prow of her adversary creeps up inch by inch, and before Papeete can realise it she is beaten. Papara has won the race.

Boating finished, we resume our exercise of patrolling the streets. The road leading from the cathedral to Mangaiatown is a veritable bower of flags. There is to be some amateur steeple-chasing at Herr Koppenrath's this afternoon. Also a match of island-cricket. I say island-cricket because the English and the Tahitian notions of the game differ. Refreshments are laid out on the grass and the players go for drinks between the runs. The fielding is done on a grotesque scale, mostly by Chinamen who, until the ball strikes one of them in the abdomen, discreetly refuse to acknowledge its presence. Mangaiatown itself has got its own particular aches. Neat huts of



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plaited grass, their eaves and gables decked with rustling plumes of paper or *reva-reva*, have been erected among the flowering trees. They tell of prizes offered by the administration for native architecture, and undreamed-of talent—the mushroom growth of a few nights—has blossomed in the strangest quarters.

Here we come suddenly on a spectacle reminding us of our own Maypole ceremonies at home. The elected queen of the May (funny to talk of May in this land of perpetual summer)—chosen for her beauty, or her willowiness, or both—sits at the door of her hut, clad in all the glory of her innocent frippery, between her two handmaidens. In case the latter prove insufficient, two doughty Kanaka warriors, their hair puffed out into fierce-looking mops, armed with business-like spears ten feet long, stand by to keep watch over the fair one. Una, slumbering by her lion, could hardly have been more effectively guarded.

The trailing fringe of a rain-squall drags across the town presently and the crowd is forced to take refuge in the Chinaman's. What a babel! Tahitians, Rarotongans, Atiu Islanders, Mangaians—all talking at once. Every variety of morals too—from the sleepy market odalisque, her hat blazoned with the ensign of a French man-of-war, to the tiny brown school-miss from the Paumotus, for whom Yet Lee's whitewashed

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barn with its wondrous copper kettles and glittering pyramids of bottles is Palace of Fortunatus, Eldorado, and New Jerusalem rolled into one.

The wooded avenues in the western portion of the town are humming with preparations for to-night's musical entertainment. The broad flowery square opposite the Palace of Justice, with its hedges of hibiscus and lines of drooping sycamores, is to be the theatre of action, and for the present the poetry of the place is almost swamped under the mazy festoons of Chinese lanterns and the bunched-up bouquets of tricolor.

It is time for lunch—but there is a difficulty in getting oneself attended to. The Hotel du Louvre is crammed with a pushing army of tourists, and Buillard's saloon, with its faded billiard-cloths and model schooners, has become the rendezvous of the *Waikaré* foc'sle hands. Nothing remains but to go home, starve patiently, and wait for the evening.

It is not long in coming. Hardly has the ubiquitous gun of the *Aube* saluted the vanishing sun-rim when the *monde* begins to collect, at first in groups, then in strings, and at last in a tossing avalanche of hats and skirts that bids fair to sweep all before it. Isolated celebrities are naughtily patrolling before the *Cercle Militaire*, where the lynx-eyed officers are watching from their bower among the trees. One or two fine

## Papeete in Gala

stately figures among them. Also a good deal of specially acquired haughtiness and biting repartee. The girls are on their best manners to-day. Here comes one—Teipo i Temarama, the maid-of-the-moon. Try and get her to smile. You'll wish you hadn't. She has a caustic—lunar<sup>1</sup> caustic—wit and the heartlessness of sixteen Barbara Allens.

And yet, O Teipo, there *was* a time when——

Gracing and filling the band-stand in the centre of the square, in faultless evening dress and swallow-tails, serene and imperturbable as the council of gods in Olympus, sit the judges, headed by one of the oldest residents—Mr. Narii Salmon. *Ave Narii, fiorituri te salutant!* (Those about to blossom into song salute you). The performers are divided into groups, fifty or so in each, mostly called after the villages or districts they represent. Pajara, Teravao, Hiteaea, Tautira, &c. The Tahitians proper monopolise the available space in front. Atius, Paumotuans, Bora-Borians sit right and left. Deathly silence. You could hear a pin drop. The president's hand goes up solemnly. The singing commences.

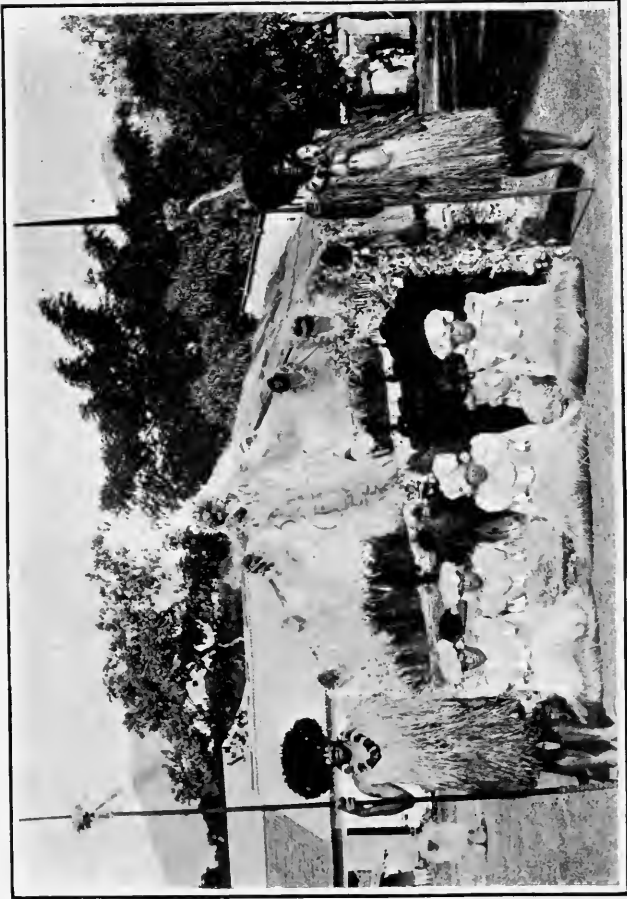
A South Sea *himené* in its highest grade of development is difficult to do justice to in print. It begins by the usual treble shriek pitched in

<sup>1</sup> Joke by De Smidt.

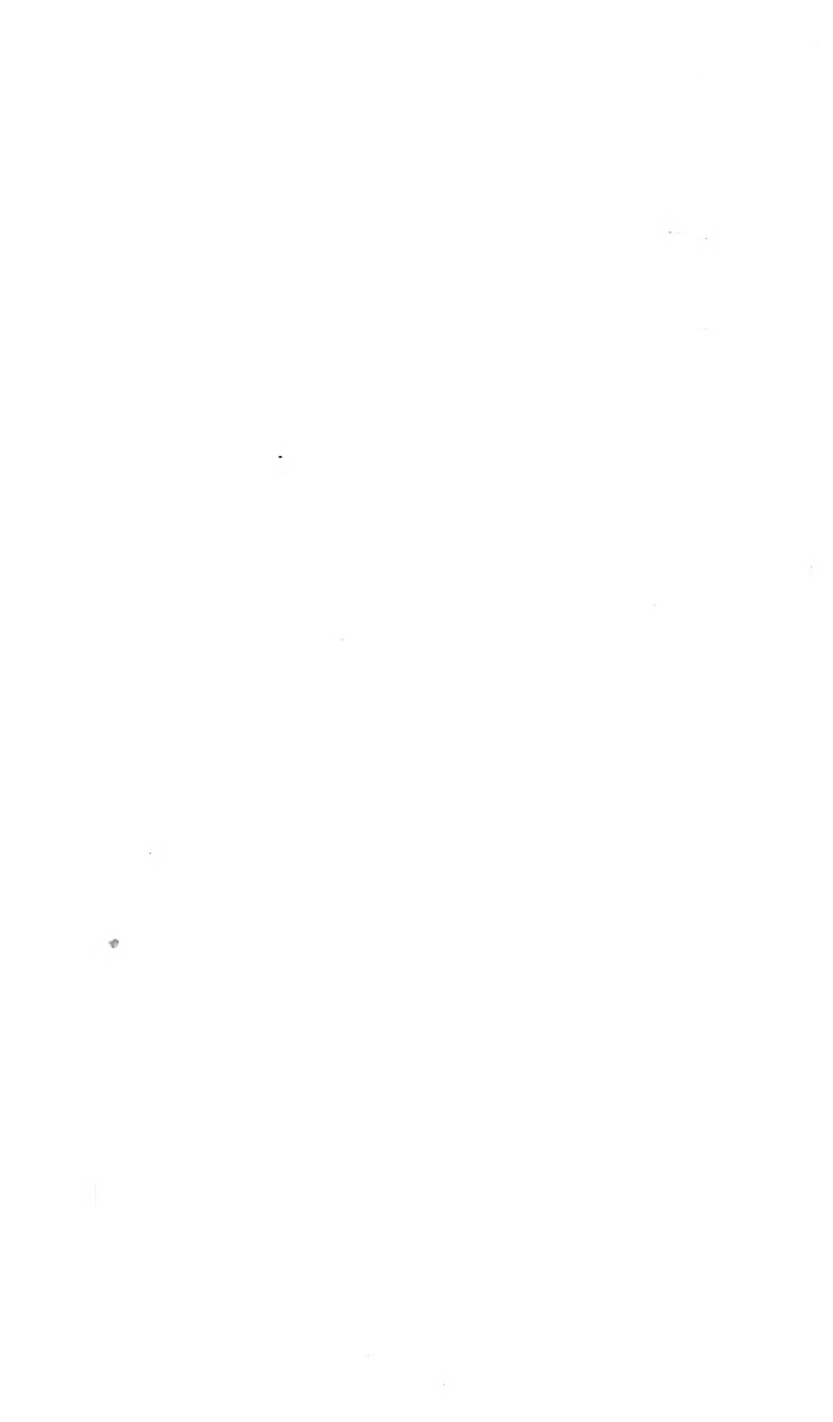
## The Log of an Island Wanderer

any key which comes handy. Just as you are trembling for the girl's vocal organs the shriek loses its viciousness and modulates off into something—probably a tune—fitful enough to embarrass a phonograph. Apparently it is without rhyme or rhythm. But the chorus don't think so. The girl is working her way down step-fashion. As she sludders down comfortably into *mezzo* they chime in amicably one by one—some repeating the melody in fugue fashion, others improvising "on their own"; others, the heavy swells of the entertainment, merely contenting themselves with growling a sort of ground-bass accompaniment.

Very few of the rules regulating civilised choral music find echo here. Nothing forbids the inter-crossing of the parts, and the bass gentlemen, if they be so minded, can blossom spontaneously into high-C tenors without infringing inter-island law. Certain harmonies, Chinese in colouring—to wit, the well-known "Grail" harmony exploited by Wagner in the "Lohengrin" prelude—recur almost to weariness. Taking it as a whole, the result is strangely, uncouthly symmetrical. Who taught these people counterpoint? Certainly not the missionaries. They have never bothered their heads encouraging musical effort. Who taught them the art of modulation? Who showed them the precise point at which a ground-bass must be altered to avoid cacophony? Is



*Three Beauties, Tahiti.*



## Papeete in Gala

this wild Tahitian melody an arbitrary assortment of notes, or is it intended to be a painting in sound, a musical suggestion of the landscape it emanates from? Does not the droning sing-song of an Arab chant bear some resemblance to the desert? Is not the very form of Scotch music as written on paper a representation, in its jerky, irregular notchings, of the Scotch hills? Is it a mere coincidence that the Ranz des Vaches predominates in Swiss melodies, or the twang of the banjo in negro ones? Does not this ebbing, swaying *himené*, with its growling substratum of male voices, signify the whistle of the trade-wind in the palms and the roar of the reef? It is a problem worth investigating. Three Tahitian dioceses have said their piece, and it is the turn of the Atiu islanders. They are by far the most gifted of the company, and as events turn out, eventually walk off with a prize. A comic incident marked the commencement of their efforts. The girl whose business it was to start was nervous. She did the preliminary wailing all right, but presently lost her head and made a wrong modulation. The basses were already in activity, and the key they chose was unfortunately the right one—as indicated by the opening shriek. When it came to the turn of the altos every one was at variance. For a few minutes the tune wavered like a lamp in a draught, then it hesi-

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tated and broke down amid cheers and hoots. It was too much for the old chieftainess. Jumping up from her seat she seized the erring prima-donna by the hair, and gave her two sounding boxes on the ear. The girl screamed, and being as muscular as she was musical, began a spirited retaliation. The police intervened, and the two were packed off shrieking defiance from the arms of their respective constables.

As the evening progresses, the spectators grow more excited and exhibit a wish to join in the fun. A few daring spirits have taken to dancing hoolas in the rings of lamplight, and have to be forcibly recalled to order. Some of the military men in the club are getting uproarious, and, tired of *himenés*, are shouting ironically for *musique—musique!* Then, bowing to the decree of the masses, the judges gravely vacate their rostrum, and the final attraction of the evening—the Papeete military band—takes their place.

This is a portion of the entertainment in which every one can participate. Well-known airs, patriotic and otherwise, have been set to native words—the “Marseillaise,” the Toreador’s song from “Carmen,” and a third abominable tune reminiscent of Lecocq—

“Rupe—rupe Tahiti!  
Rupe—rupe Farani!”

(Vive la France! Vive Tahiti!) The tune is in



## Papeete in Gala

quadrille-tempo. Two hundred odd girls surround the band-stand, and amuse themselves by capering round in a circle. The colours! The dust! The enthusiasm! Let us thank Heaven, or the French, that there is at least one little corner still remaining in this hideously overgrown world where a man who is satiated with civilisation can lay his weary head and be lulled to sleep in a whirl of tropical imagery. For years we have dreamed of such spectacles, and at last we have found one—in Papeete.

I hardly know how I found my way home that night. I remember passing up the garden walk (it was my own house, not the hotel), with its waving blue flowers and white patches of moonlight. I remember throwing myself on the bed and relapsing into blissful unconsciousness——

Shrieks from the road. A female voice shouting my name. “Beretane — Beretane — ahoo! Na oe hoia!”

It is a serenade! A tall pliable vahine, her long hair floating in the night wind, her eyes gleaming with — ahem — patriotic enthusiasm, bangles rattling on her bare brown arms——

“The infant of an infant world, as pure  
From Nature—lovely, warm, and premature.”

Go away, mademoiselle! You’ll wake the police! Go away at once! Naughty girl! Shocking!

## CHAPTER XXIX

### TAHITIAN SOCIETY

“Too comic for the solemn things they are,  
Too solemn for the comic touches in them.”

It is a queer jumble—a pie in which the few raisins have so thoroughly absorbed the flavour of the suet as to be undistinguishable but for the colour and for that nameless aureole of respectability that tells you they *are* raisins without the cook's certificate.

To a globe-trotter who is travelling to avoid the crush, or a remittance-man who is doing the same because the crush avoids *him*, the name Society Islands sounds a trifle ominous. As one understands the word in Europe it means balls, parties, scandal, door-slamming, and a variety of concentric plottings of which a duchess, or an erotic novelist, may be the splash-foundation. Let him be of good cheer, however. The splash is there somewhere ; but if he flatters himself he is going to close up on it in a hurry he will find himself mistaken. It is easier to wobble in the rings. You can take all of them at once, or explore segments in small doses,

## Tahitian Society

whichever you please. It will amuse you and it won't hurt anybody. Is not the French motto that greets you over the door of the Customs, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity? Then what have you to fear, brother globe-trotter? Cut into the coffee-bush—that is, if the coffee-bush doesn't cut you—and win.

The first forerunning signs of social amenity are convincing enough. There are two clubs in Papeete, the Cercle Bougainville and the Cercle Militaire, and the hospitality of both is extended to the stranger with an earnestness that would shame the ancient patriarchs. Kindnesses, civil speeches, invitations flow in from all sides. Within twenty-four hours of your landing you have been apparently introduced to half the island. Tahiti begins to take form in your brain as a Consolidated Trust for the benefit of foreigners—it is only when you dive beneath the surface and probe the private opinions these jolly good fellows have about each other that you catch the glitter of the serpent's scales.

And how do I come by these reflections? Here I am at the back of the beyond, living a devil-may-care, double-shuffle, demented existence in a romantic, mosquito-peopled cot of trellised vine with vahines in pink serenading me on the accordion at night and gentlemen in kharki whose

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sing-song wail of "how they lost their ship," becomes monotonous by repetition, exchanging ideas on the world, the flesh, and the devil (particularly the last two) by day. A charming variety indeed. But let us not digress. I am supposed to be hunting for the central splash—the hub round which Tahitian fashion revolves. Twenty years back, it used to be Queen Aimata Pomaré (lit., the lady-with-the-cold-in-the-head-who-eats-eyes)—and a very sweet, good-natured, hospitable hub she made too, as many of our retired admirals and naval officers can testify. At present it is—Norman Brander; that is, if the title be not disputed by a score of liverless French officers, or Yet Lee.

Hold hard. Our object is not to be facetious. Our object is to find the splash. We shall discover it in time.

That is—no. I fear not. Properly speaking there is no central splash. The hub does not exist. Tahiti is not what it used to be. The hyper-official jingoes have done their work. Papeete has progressed backwards. Where once glittered a harbourful of dashing men-of-war, now looms a poor handful of whitewashed trading smacks. Where once the electric lights flared from their bronze brackets, now glimmer a few dirty-glassed oil-lamps. Pomaré's palace is deserted. A lawsuit is pending over its pro-

## Tahitian Society

prietorship, and as long as Papeete lawyers continue to regard it as a source of income, so long will the weeds continue to sprout between its steps. *Sic transit gloria Tahitiensis.*

In this dreamy, flower-scented air, under the shadow of these smiling velvet hills, two distinct "sets" have met in mortal combat—the "missionary" set and the "trader" set. The fight is bitter and never-ending—no quarter being demanded or expected on either side.

What there is in a missionary that refuses amalgamation with the ordinary rate-payer is still unknown. Physically there is little or nothing about the person of a missionary that would serve to point him out as a man different to other men. We ourselves have studied the genus all over the Pacific. We have mostly found them human—sometimes eminently so. The missionary, as you meet him in Tahiti, is generally a man of middle age, portly, rosy-cheeked, and well fed. He is naturally cheerful—nay, there are even muscular suggestions about his biceps that make you want to take him on in a sparring-match. His vices, where they exist, are very harmless. He has a fondness for swallow-tail coats, gardenias, and cigarettes. He likes his daughters to practise the piano. Still, barring these little foibles, you would probably put him down as a decent all-round good fellow.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

But—try and reconcile him to the rest of the crowd. Aha! the shoe pinches! The more you try, the more hopeless your case becomes. The missionary don't and won't love traders. There is no earthly reason why he should *not* love them. Were it not for the traders and their energetic administration the missionary would have been eaten ages ago. But so it is.

Socially, I admit, the missionary claims precedence—if only from the fact that he was there first. If he wasn't his predecessors were. There is such a thing as island lineage, and missionaries, like executioners in Japan, are more often born than made. Like Pooh-Bah in the "Mikado," the missionary isn't fond of saying how-d'ye-do to anything under the rank of a stockbroker.

What wonder Tahiti is clique-ridden? The more you endeavour to reconcile the island's heterogeneous elements the more they fly asunder. The smallness of the colony, and the characteristic speed with which scandal of any kind travels—the fact that each atom knows and shudders at the private history of the next atom may also be to blame for this state of affairs.

Leaving the missionary on one side and descending into the giddier strata of society, we find the same spirit of disintegration at work.

"If there were only some decent fellows to talk to," is the querulous complaint of nine out

## Tahitian Society

of ten Papeete club-danglers. "For Heaven's sake don't ask *him*," growls some one else over his glass of vermouth, "he's not in our set."

Ah! sweet Tahiti! what you need is not another bushel of colonists, but a patent cement to weld you together.

On the smooth Rue de Rivoli I meet H.M. Consul Milsom and tackle him despairingly. "Can't we go a picnic up Papenoo, and take the Thing-um-bobs?" A stare of innocent horror. "My dear fellow, I don't *know* these people." "And why?" "Why—oh, well—it's a long story. The fact is Mrs. Thing-um-bob ran away with What's-his-name, and sold Thing-um-bob's py-jamas for rum—I assure you it would never do."

Etc., etc. In the Marquesas at least they are more pungent. "I never leave cards at that house," explains Eater-of-swollen-feet to Chewer-of-eyeballs; "my father ate his grandmother, and we've not been on speaking terms since!"

And so the comedy wears on, and the attitude of one-half of the Society Islands towards the other half is that of Guelphs and Ghibellines. Norman—Norman Brander: with your urbane fluency of language, with your suave manners and polyglot knowledge of island lingo, cannot you do something to bring some of these wayward people together? They're none so bad individually, Norman, and as the last descendant

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of Tahiti's ancient lineage, you ought to be able to chivy amiability into the more rebellious ones.

Isolated attempts, indeed, have been occasionally made, generally by outsiders.

The Union picnic was one of these. It was in the earlier days of the Auckland run, and the company, by way of humouring the administration and paving the way for mutual good-fellowship, decided on taking a party for a picnic to the neighbouring island of Moorea. The thing was organised *nem. con.*, and the task of issuing invites entrusted to a Monsieur Tandonnet, one of the most influential of thereabout merchant princes. With the first strokes of Tandonnet's pen trouble began. The leader of that year's politics chanced to be a man possessed of that most ambiguous of blessings, a native wife. The latter was not on speaking terms with Madame T., and consequently found herself left out of the invitations. Three other notorieties, likewise enemies of the merchant princess, shared the same fate, and retired growling behind their verandah lattices. Meanwhile the list swelled. A hundred Government officials were included, likewise fifty army officers, and a bushel of missionaries. Both parties were given *carte blanche* in the matter of ladies. Both made good use of the privilege. The missionaries brought their daughters, the officers their—consolations. Be-



## Tahitian Society

sides the full compendium of longshore giddiness there were four consuls, two members of Parliament, an escapee from Noumea, a Russian prince in kharki, a dismantled Spanish ambassador, three Cuban bandits, a Portugee dentist (*taote iriti niho* in the vernacular), and a contractor for stolen beef from the King country—the most variegated load of muscle and morals ever seen since the days of Noah.

With the first hauling in of the kedge the sets began to segregate. The missionaries, in virtue of superior holiness, possessed themselves of the upper-deck. The after-deck groaned under the weight of Government officials, the forward-deck was tenanted by the officers and their nimbus of female frailty. The smaller cliques were equally reserved. The four consuls entrenched themselves in the captain's cabin, kindly including the Russian prince in their graces; the dismantled ambassador monopolised the galley; the Portugee dentist the wheelhouse. The escapee from Noumea played cards in the cuddy, the cattle contractor—defeated in his intention of finding the cloak-room and going through the company's pockets—crept into a cabin and went to sleep. It was all in the day's work.

The rain came down before Moorea was reached, and a few of the vahines were very sick. Refreshments had been prepared in the saloon.

## The Log of an Island Wanderer

There had been some intricate argument as to precedence. It was proposed to divide the cake-fight into four bells—first bell, missionaries—second, traders—third, officials—fourth, officers, nondescripts, bandits, frailties, &c.

Vain hope! The rain had strung the company's appetite to breaking-point. At the first stroke discipline fled to the winds—vahines, Kanakas, traders, officers, made for the dining-room in a jumble. The portliest of the missionaries, who had taken up his stand in the immediate vicinity of the companion, found himself hustled down-stairs on a muslin toboggan-slide and sandwiched between two frailties and a Kanaka with a mouth-organ. The British consul had to ask the Nou-mean escapee to pass the mustard. The ambassador and the Portugee dentist had to share the same pickle-jar. On deck M. Tandonnet's brass band, tired of being soaked, ceased banging at the "Marseillaise" and also took the staircase by storm. How that meal progressed without developing into a free fight is only known to the stewards and Providence. All that is recorded is that the victuals vanished, like Hans Breitmann's lager beer—

"afay in de ewigheit"

before any of the more civilised members had time to get a sight of the bill of fare. The table was as though the locust had gone over it.



*A Picnic—Fautaua.*



## Tahitian Society

The *Upolu* had dropped anchor in Papetoai Bay. An excursion of some kind seemed advisable, if only to give the stewards a chance to clean up. Among the scrub two walks led right and left. The missionaries went to the right. The next boatful—traders—catching the inky gleam of swallow-tails in the distance, decided that their path lay to the left. The third boatful—officials—finding both ways blocked, looked disconsolately out to sea and longed for a flying-machine. The soldiers and hoola-girls remained on board, the former from boredom, the latter to devour the sugar remaining in the bowls and improvise scandal.

Cigarette-smoke and cognac combined breed confidence. The officers now hit on a diabolical plan, viz. ousting the missionaries and getting possession of the upper-deck. This was why, when the boatload of swallow-tails returned, they found a regiment of epaul-tted Frenchmen smoking in the long cane chairs and blowing rings over the taffrail. The eldest missionary made an attempt to regain the lost field—but the most coquettish of the vahines, mistaking the nature of his quest, offered him a slice of pine-apple and he fled. There only remained the after-deck, one-half of which was already tenanted by traders.

The home-coming of that gay *Upolu* was a sorry business. The rain brought out personal

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enmities. The swallow-tails drooped ominously. Two knights of commerce—a vanilla-curer from Papara and the agent for a New Zealand trading concern—came to blows. The cattle-contractor offered to take on the three Cuban bandits and throw them overboard “as per invoice.” The upper-deck party had started a hoola, and one or two market beauties, contracting jealousies, took to pulling each other’s hair. The captain of the *Upolu* was at his wit’s end. He appealed to the British consul. The latter replied by popping head first into the wheelhouse and barricading the door. It was all Milsom could do, and he did it with a will.

As a last resource the band were rooted out and told to play “God Save the Queen.” Ophicleide covers a multitude of sins, and it covered the tune to the extent of making it unrecognisable. There were ironical cheers from the French officers and clapping of hands from disaffected parties. The bandmaster wept. If this should get about, the majesty of England (fortunately Milsom was in the wheelhouse) would consider herself insulted and he would lose his position. The rattle of the anchor-chain cut into the middle of his apology. The captain gave a gasp of relief. The picnic was over.

So ended the first and last attempt at welding

## Tahitian Society

Papeete together. Isolated attempts at jollification there are indeed. There is Raoulx and his Society of Excursionists. There is Kurka and his Kegel-bahn. There are the French officers and their wives who practise the score of "Carmen" upside down. Vermège and his orchestra—a really inspired institution. Prince Hinoe and his flower-crowned loves. The pudding thins. We are at the market "bulls" and the beach-comber element. And we are no nearer our splash-centre than before.

Tahiti does not live. It exists under protest—beautifully, it is true, but under protest nevertheless. From Dan to Beersheba—from Mehetia to Tubuai-Manou—I doubt if there be a man without his schedule of complaints. And what deep, dark, desperate complaints they are too! From those of the Papeete political leader whose advice on the Chinese question Europe has recklessly ignored, to those of Milsom whose bicycle tire has sprung a leak; from the woes of the governor, whose laundress won't bring back his gold-buttoned livery in time for his wife's next at-home, to the natty dapper little American consul, who is wearing himself to a shadow thinking about his—ah—corporation.

Such a load of home-made crosses generally leads to ruptures. Society Islands forsooth! I had almost rather apply to Papeete the definition

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applied long since by some cynic to Hammer-smith—beg pardon, West Kensington—“a lot of variegated grievances, each unit of which believes himself a little tin Providence on wheels.”

And whither is such disaffectedness going to lead you, gentlemen? When the hour calls, and in obedience to a Fate before which even the *Aube's* ten-pounder must perforce keep silent, the busy outer world of sin and sorrow knocks at your gates, what will you leave as a legacy? Who will tell the story of your loves, your hates, your procrastinations, the dilatory pettifogging that led to your fall? Who will draw the moral?

A bit of silver braid, a blossom of tiaré, a worn-out mouth-organ, Tahiti will vanish in smoke like the mists of Orofena, and humanity—relentless, workaday humanity—will throne the middle spaces of the blue Pacific.

On a tomb in the Papeete cemetery we read :

SACRED TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
SOPHRONIA ELISABETH MARY JANE HIGGINS,  
NIECE OF LORD W——,<sup>1</sup> V.C., H.I.E.C., K.G., &c..

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“*Be ye kind one to another.*”

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<sup>1</sup> Name suppressed to avoid complications.



## CHAPTER XXX

### NATIVE WIFEDOM—A WHITY-BROWN STUDY

“Mated with a squalid savage, what to me were sun or clime,  
I the heir of all the ages in the foremost files of time?”

MOST people familiar with the literature of the Pacific must have been struck by the rôle played therein by that burning and ever-present blister, the intermarriage of white men and brown women.

Stoddard has maundered over the theme; Louis Becke has sentimentalised it; Loti, being a Frenchman and a young one at that, has deified it and surrounded his “marriage” with a halo of romance so marvellously unreal as to make it doubtful whether he actually knew what he was talking about. Certain it is that, contrary to what many people suppose, Loti was *not* the hero of his book. Rarahu indeed existed. She died some years since in Bora-Bora, and her death—which was not pretty—was due neither to love nor consumption. But fiction is fiction. It is with the reality we have to deal.

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At first sight there is no reason why a white man and a brown woman should not pull well together. Out of the odd scattered millions of white men who are teaching the natives of the Pacific the value of their speckless aristocracy, fully two-thirds are wiving with native women in some fashion or other. There are good reasons for this. The islands are hardly places to bring delicately nurtured European women to. The climate that broadens the phylacteries of the magnolia shrivels the northern bloodroot. Society, in these fringes of creation, is filigree worn thin from exposure.

Children—white children—become successively a problem, a danger, a terror, a warning. House-keeping, in the highest European sense, is a dead letter. It is not strange, therefore, that in default of a helpmate of his own race the new arrival—be he trader, official, or common seaman—will look about him for another and easier way of obeying the divine injunction.

The daughters of the land are beautiful. And their beauty is one which, with all its exotic attributes, has yet enough of the civilised woman's characteristics to make it, for a season at least, a palatable substitute for the eyes of blue that Jack has left behind him among the Midland furze or the violets of Devon. A beauty made up of fairly

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pale skin, fairly regular features, fairly kissable mouth—all or nearly all of Eve's conquering paraphernalia condensed into the supplest, the naughtiest, the most bewitching piece of coloured womanhood the earth has to show.

Jack's principles (if he has any) begin to vacillate. Should he decide on courting a lady, circumstances and the happy-go-lucky nature of island relationships make his path an easy one. Courtship is an idyll in tennis-shoes. Ever since Christianity, so civilising, has made its appearance in the islands it is no longer the *teuteu arii* (servant of the king) who breaks through the door and carries off the lady by force. Her consent must nowadays be asked.

In isolated North Pacific islands it used to be the custom for the girls to propose first; and even as late as 1830, when Montgomery visited the Sandwich Islands, the sight of a melancholy bachelor Kanaka whose complaint it was that "no girl had asked him" was more common than it is now. On the whole, South Sea ladies need attacking in much the same way as English ones. Indeed they sometimes give one pointers—but that is another question.

Let us suppose Jack safely married. His next move will be to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure harmony in his establishment.

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His wife's relations are generally the first to give trouble. As in Europe, there is such a thing as waking up to the fact that one has "married the whole family." The circle has to be squared, and the squaring involves more mathematics than Norie knew. Eloquence is of no use. Heroic measures succeed more often. The way in which one recent bridegroom—the employé of a noted Tahiti trading firm—settled the difficulty is sufficiently original to deserve chronicling.

Jim Wakefield was a "boy" of some notoriety in the islands. He was not known to have any particular affection for natives, and when his marriage with a chocolate-coloured young lady from Hiteaea was announced, Papeete received an electric shock.

The girl was pretty enough. There were in the family seven brothers and sisters, two grandmothers, a posse of well-meaning but dissipated uncles, aunts to match, fifteen cousins, and a regiment of Kanaka hangers-on of various shades of colour and morality. Papeete looked on with bated breath.

The wedding was a gay one. A sumptuous feast of baked hogs and *miti* had been laid out in the back premises of Jimmy's intended residence, and, wonder of wonders! the entire bride's family, dissipated uncles and all, were bidden to

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the feast. While his dear wife's relatives guzzled and sang Jimmy maintained an ominous silence. He appeared to be closely studying the faces of the guests one by one. At the close of the dinner Jimmy rose and vanished into the house. There was a pause. What new surprise was dear Ariitea's lord preparing?

Jimmy reappeared. In his hand lay a mighty double-barrelled gun. "Now," he said cheerfully, clicking the lock to show the piece was in order, "I know you, every mother's son of you, and the first son of a gun, man, woman, or child, who sets foot in this house again, I'll shoot him dead!"

The Kanakas grinned awkwardly, but they knew Jimmy to be a good fellow and a man of his word, and took the hint.

But even these drastic measures are hardly sufficient to keep a native woman from the company of her like, for law of race is stronger than law of man, and class feeling mightier than the bonds of tried friendship.

Let us suppose, however, that Jack has overcome all this and is living peaceably with the partner of his joys. Ariitea makes a good "plain" housekeeper. The items of furniture required by her are not extensive. From her father's house Ariitea brings a chest of drawers, a few photo-

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graphs, a bundle of linen tied in a pareo, her married sister's portrait framed in shells, a few lace curtains, a patchwork quilt, and a Bible. She discards going about barefoot, and in the superior dignity of married woman takes to wearing shoes. She rises with the lark and goes to market without a murmur. When her husband has got over wondering at Ariitea's energy he sees that vanity has as much to say in the matter as love, 5 P.M. being the fashionable time to show off your new dress.

All this is very pretty. But a change comes. The precise tick of Jack's lifetime when he first begins to find his native wife a bore is difficult to locate. With some men it comes after the first year, with others after the first week. As time wears the tinsel from romance, Jack begins to realise that with all Ariitea's acquired missionary lore there are certain absolutely ineradicable savage traits about the girl's character that nothing—not even time in big doses—can fully efface.

His doll has no notion of time, space, or money. The moral obligation of a promise is to her emptiness of rhetoric. She will insist on sitting on the floor. If there be any washing, mangling, ironing to be done, she prefers to do it in full view of the street on the front

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verandah. She finds lolling over the Chinaman's counter or smoking cigarettes in her neighbour's back-garden more amusing than attending to her husband's dinner. The romance of the connection is over and it only needs the final *dénouement* to bring about a collapse.

Jack finds out what it is to be a papa. It is rather fun at first. But presently new cares develop. Ariitea as a mother is affectionate enough, Heaven knows, but she has none of the snap or stamina of her European counterpart. The children are allowed to wander at will among the fishermen of the reef or the melon-sellers of the market. The purer sentiment of paternity — that of seeing himself mirrored again in the person of these brown mites—does not come to Jack. The white man cannot live again in his brown children. And yet their future torments him. What will become of them. What are the islands making of them?

Two courses are here open, a bad and a worse. The first, the bad one, is to "let things slide," *i.e.* keep the children in the islands and let them grow up as they can. The second, the worse, is to send them away to be educated in some big centre of civilisation, say Auckland or San Francisco. We have seen how this

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turned out in one individual case. Should the father contemplate leaving the islands and settling at home, the proprietorship of a Europeanised brown daughter is hardly a blessing. If—as is more usual—Jack's true home is in the islands, it becomes a positive curse. It means that, her education completed, back comes the young lady to a lonely, monotonous, joyless existence—quite devoid of the comforts for which her parent's mistaken kindness has taught her to crave—with the brummagem politics of rival traders for topic of conversation, for amusement an occasional scratch entertainment at the hotel, the yearly call on H.M. Consul, or the funeral of an ex-something-or-other.

No—native wifeness is a troublesome question at best, and the wisest thing for any man tempted that way will be to remember, and practically apply, the advice given in a vaguely similar case years ago by Mr. Punch—Don't.

THE END

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